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# FOOTINGS FOR FAITH

# FOOTINGS FOR FAITH

BY

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# FOOTINGS FOR FAITH

## INTRODUCTION

IF the message of this book is to be clear and effective, the point of view must be made distinct. A few introductory statements may help to avoid misunderstanding.

It will be readily seen that these essays are small talks on great subjects and that, consequently, they can do no more than open the discussion of the themes they present. The wisdom of many men and many volumes cannot suffice to treat these themes exhaustively. The most that can be hoped from these short and simple essays is that they may open gates through which one who wants to grow in knowledge of the realities of the eternal life may find entrance. They indicate openings in the woods where trails start; the reader must find his own way over the trail to the heights.

It should be distinctly avowed and understood, also, that this book does not deal with the most

important part of life. It is but a help toward that most important part. The most important matter in life is religion; I am dealing not with religion but with its intellectual construction. The vital concern is the relation of the life to God. Nothing is more clear in the Bible and in the history of religion than that the only absolute condition of living with God is *commitment*, practical living faith in him. One may have such vital, saving faith without a very clear intellectual construction of his faith; real fellowship with God may exist even in connection with a very faulty theology. The fundamental necessity for a truly religious life is not what we think but what relation our life, as a whole, sustains to God.

Yet a religious experience can never be fully satisfying till it has been thought through and put in terms that satisfy the intellect. Aiming, as it does, to aid in that work, this book may afford real help in the religious life, even though it does not deal directly with religion but rather with our thought about religious realities.

It should especially be kept in mind as one reads that these words are addressed to a

special class, or type, of mind. This fact will explain the presence of some statements and the omission of many others. This book is addressed primarily, it might almost be said exclusively, to those, in our colleges and elsewhere, who are finding it hard to reconcile their knowledge and their faith, who have been drawn away by modern science and philosophy, in their many departments, from the thoroughgoing and sturdy beliefs of their fathers.

It is doubtful if the church and its leaders realize how large this class is, how serious their difficulty seems to them, or how many are included of the best men and women of the time, those who are most faithful in church worship and work and most eager for a vital experience of fellowship with God. In every intelligent congregation there are many who hold concealed in their hearts, unsuspected by those who know them best, the painful longing: "O that I knew where I might find Him, that I might even come before His presence!"

Nor is it only—perhaps it is not chiefly—within the church that this class is to be found. One of the clearest and most significant phe-

nomena of this age is the rapid and extensive growth of what we may call unorganized religion. Widely diffused among the people, gathering strength every year, is a vague, confused, yet very real desire for religion—a sense of the need of it, the conviction that life is lame without it. Yet coupled with this sincere longing is a decided feeling of the inadequacy of old statements of faith, of the impossibility of finding intellectual satisfaction in any theology that is out of touch with modern science and philosophy. More and more every year our literature is reflecting this feeling; and the most popular books are those which give expression to it. An art student in one of the largest schools in America tells me that when the hundreds and thousands of young men and young women studying there gather in groups at the noon-hour, they discuss some phase of religious thought or experience more frequently and more eagerly than any other subject. No one can come into close and sympathetic contact with college students and not realize how many of them are in this class, at once longing for a real and satisfying religious experience and find-

ing it impossible to hold a faith that cannot live self-respectingly with modern knowledge.

We may ignore entirely the question who or what is to blame for this condition. Whether the church or the modern mind is chiefly at fault, the fact that any considerable body of honest, earnest people, religious at heart, are out of touch with the ordinary expressions of the church's creed imposes on the church the obligation to meet them sympathetically, frankly, and with extreme adaptation. The same missionary impulse that prompts the church to seek the Chinese or Japanese or Hindus and translate her thoughts into their words and thought forms should lead the church to seek this class, intellectually estranged from her, translating her faith into their language and thought forms. We ought to see and feel the essential selfishness of the common song:

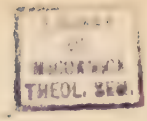
> "It's the old-time religion,
> And it's good enough for me."

Perhaps the old-time religion, and the old-time statements and constructions of it, are good

enough for the people inside the church. But that is a small matter. Here is the great question: How can we so interpret and express and adapt our beliefs that they shall lay hold vitally and compellingly on the mass of men, on the people of to-day? A church which is unwilling to face that question, unwilling to put her faith in forms that will appeal to the outsider, has wandered far from the gospel of the ninety and nine.

I ask that readers of these essays keep constantly in mind that they are addressed to this particular class and aim at no more than to indicate openings, beginnings of safe trails. "Footings for faith" they are. We children of this thought age have been caught in a vast incoming tide and are "all at sea." Deep water now lies between us and the point we rounded when we left the safe home of our childhood faith and went exploring new parts of the shore. The rising tide of modern thinking and modern life has swept around and hemmed us in. There are many who can scarce keep their heads above the waves. Some are safe on little shelves of rock; some are

swimming strongly. But many are in great fear and uncertainty. Can we not find and indicate, here and there, places where the footing is firm; where the flood is not too deep; where the tired and bewildered may stand and recover breath and regain courage and cheer, that at last they may reach the great, solid, far-stretching land of God's truth? The aim of this book will be achieved if it finds such temporary use. I imagine myself face to face with intelligent, serious, thoughtful men and women who want to be Christians, who feel sure that religion has value and power but are in doubt as to its truth and are unwilling to be Christians if it involves any sacrifice of intellectual self-respect. I eagerly crave the privilege of showing them the places where some of us have found firm footing, of making clear to them that full loyalty to truth as modern science reveals it is wholly compatible with a hearty and joyous faith in the fundamental positions of the Christian creed.




# THE PROBLEM OF FAITH AND DOUBT

BEFORE taking up the specific doctrines or truths of the Christian faith with which we are to deal, we may well look at a problem which precedes and conditions them all. We may call it "The Problem of Faith and Doubt."

It has never, in any age, been easy to have and to hold a strong, clear faith. Real, vigorous belief has always been an achievement. We do well to remember this fact. It is easy to think ourselves the first who have had to wrestle with serious doubts and find faith hard.

Why is it that doubts grow like weeds and faiths like flowers? Why are not the fundamental positions of religion as sharp, as absolute, as unmistakable as the fundamental postulates of mathematics?

It may be helpful to look at this problem of faith and doubt from two points of view, examining first certain difficulties which have special force at the present time and then think-

ing of the practical difficulty involved in the general task of belief.

There are to-day three special forms, or phases, of difficulty in the way of a clear and satisfying intellectual construction of religion. We may call them the *Scientific*, the *Philosophical*, and the *Psychological*.

I. *The Scientific Difficulty*. During the years and decades immediately back of us, there has come an immense, a wholly unprecedented, expansion of scientific knowledge, theory, and habit. Men have awakened to the marvellous fact, simple yet unappreciated by foregoing generations, that this world which appeals to man's senses can be known by accurate observation and inference. New branches of natural science have sprung up and assumed immense proportions. There is an intoxication about the new scientific method and its resultant body of classified facts. It is not strange that natural science has become a dominating force. The scientist has had to make his way against a mass of affirmation, speculation, dogma, superstition, and prejudice. At every step of his rightful advance he has had to fight men pro-

fessing to represent theology and philosophy. No wonder the mind of the age has become obsessed with the exclusive validity of the scientific method, till many have come to think instinctively that the only proof is scientific demonstration. It is very easy to contrast the assurance, the readiness to submit to test, the non-partisanship of science with the dogmatic claims, the uncertainty, the conflicting viewpoints of religious belief, very much to the disadvantage of the latter. So it has become easy for many, almost inevitable for some, to hold that religious realities are unprovable, and therefore less worthy of confidence or even of attention than are the results of scientific investigation.

Let us frankly admit at once that religious realities are unprovable, if our definition of proof be limited to scientific demonstration.

> "We have but faith; we cannot know;
> For knowledge is of things we see."

God, eternal life, the divine lordship of Christ, the power of prayer, the inspiration of the Bible, the transformation of human life through God's

atoning grace, these are inherently incapable of scientific proof. If one is to adopt modern scientific method as his exclusive means and test of knowledge, then any real knowledge of the realities of religion is impossible.

But is the right of science to rule so well established, so extensive, so absolute as we sometimes thoughtlessly allow? Ask yourself this very simple question: Why is it that science is so sure? It is not because natural science sees further or more truly than philosophy or religion, but because it is, by its very nature, essentially limited to an outside realm, where alone absolute accuracy is possible.

The superiority of science to theology in the matter of accuracy is one with the superiority of potatoes to poems in certainty of measurement.

Natural science explains with marvellous exactness and fidelity the external world; but there is an inner world which it misses entirely, and it misses reality in missing that inner world. It is there that life truly abides. Some one gives us this simple but vivid illustration: Here is a woman sweeping a room. With what

is she sweeping? With a broom. Natural science can tell you all about that broom and its work. But the woman is sweeping not only with a broom, but with a *purpose*. In that fact lies something which defies the senses, which can be handled by science partially and clumsily, if at all. Yet the *purpose*, which defies exact scientific definition, is more important, more decisive, more vital than is the broom, which is so thoroughly satisfying as an object of knowledge.

The truth is, science deals with facts and only with facts. But within and above the facts is a world of values, of meanings. It is a world far greater, richer, more real, more worth while than the world of facts. But natural science, absolute mistress and ruler in the world of facts, waits at the door of that higher world. You can no more let natural science tell you the truth about the inner life of the spirit than you can get a true account of your home and its real life from the men who deliver packages at the door.

Here is a book. It is a fact, or a composition of facts, in the world's life. Scientific obser-

vation and inference can tell you very much about that book. It is made up of paper and cloth; these substances have been through processes of printing, binding, stamping. On the pages are numbers, words, sentences. Of all this outward and obvious fact of the book science can give you a perfect account. But is that all there is to the book? If it were, it would never have been made. There is a meaning, a value, in the book, of which meaning and value the form is but the servant. The book as a fact can be weighed with absolute nicety; but where are the scales that can fix the value of the thoughts in it or measure the worth of its poems?

We must realize that science is rightful lord in the realm of facts but an unlawful tyrant when it attempts to dominate the world of values. We have rightfully asserted our independence of dogma in the realm of fact; we must claim our rightful independence of physical science and its sense proof in the higher realm of values.

II. Closely allied to this scientific difficulty is what we have called the *Philosophical Diffi-*

*culty*. Along with the progress of natural science has come the emergence and increasing domination of a theory which seeks to account for life as it is. It is the theory of evolution—that life has come to its present condition by a process of unfolding from the simple to the complex. It has seemed to many, who have felt constrained to accept this theory, that it makes God unnecessary, eliminates him from the life of the world.

It is clearly aside from the purpose and scope of this book to attempt any discussion of the arguments for and against the truth of the evolutionary theory. It is sufficient that many accept it heartily as their philosophy, that modern scientific and philosophic teaching assumes its truth, that the thinking of to-day is almost exclusively in terms of the evolutionary hypothesis. Have those who have heartily accepted the evolutionary hypothesis thereby lost God? Has a true and vigorous Christian faith become impossible for them?

What matters most is that we shall not allow ourselves to be bullied by a word, an image, or a fancied process; we must be able to discrim-

inate between the description of a process and the finding of a cause. It is easy and fascinating to imagine an original germ composed of some simple world-stuff, unfolding, changing through infinite gradations and adaptations, until it has expanded into the marvellous richness of the universe in which we live. But we forget that all through that process the question of power, of cause, has not been touched. "How?" and "Why?" are eternally different questions; to answer one is not to answer the other.

The fact is, we are all too apt to read the evolutionary process backward instead of forward. We concentrate our gaze on that simple primordial germ and say: "There is nothing in the world to-day which was not in that original cell." But the reality, that which we really know, our starting-point, is this bewilderingly rich, involved, complex life of the universe *as it is*. There is the fact. And all this slow process of evolution, which we imagine, means at most only that we place back in the original germ the potentiality of this abounding, universal life. We have simply pushed our search

for cause, for power, back further. Rather would it be true for most of us to say that we have, in our evolutionary theory, merely the process which demands at every step a vital force driving and guiding it. Darwin reverently claims, at the conclusion of "The Origin of Species," that the question of power and cause is not touched by the theory of evolution. The simplest definition of evolution may also be the best: "change with continuity." But why change? And, more significant question still, why change for the better? Bergson's words win us with their truth no less than with their brilliancy when he tells us that scientific theory simply analyzes life and puts it together again as a boy arranges the pieces of an intricate picture puzzle; or when he remarks: "The creation of the visual apparatus is no more explained by the assembling of its anatomic parts than the digging of a canal could be explained by the heaping up of the earth which might have formed its banks."

Natural selection, variation, the evolutionary process—this is at most a method, not a cause. Back of it all is life, the creative and sustaining

reality, which science cannot see or know, which the heart of man seeks through faith.

III. The third special difficulty of our day may be called the *Psychological.*

I mean by this the haunting sense of confusion between the subjective and the objective, the continual confounding of truth with our own fancies. "Do I, indeed, reach God, or do I only sound depths in my own nature? What is reality and what is fancy in religion?" Our age is peculiarly susceptible to such doubts, and thousands are oppressed by them.

It might be a sufficient answer to point out the fact that all our thinking is subject to this difficulty, not alone our religious thinking. Kant still stands unmoved from his position that no one knows "the thing-in-itself." All our knowledge comes to us mediated by our personal consciousness.

But there is a simpler and warmer answer to be given, which is that *the religious impulse itself demands reality in the object.*

There could not be a clearer or more beautiful setting of the truth I am trying to express than in the words with which Professor Coe in-

troduces his helpful study of "The Religion of a Mature Mind":

"A youth complained to his mother that his prayers contained no sure sense that God heard or would answer. The mother replied: 'May not your impulse to pray be God's manifestation of himself to you.' As the youth grew to manhood this hint unfolded into an interpretation of life as a whole."

"Tell him that his very longing is itself an answering cry;
That his prayer, 'Come, gracious Allah,' is my answer, 'Here am I.'
Every inmost aspiration is God's angel undefiled;
And in every 'O my Father' slumbers deep a 'Here, my child.'"

These and other special difficulties are, at bottom, due to our new world view, our changed conception of life and the universe.

I borrow from a friend a simple, graphic presentation of the difference between the old and the new world view.

The old view conceived two parallel horizontal planes, one far above the other. The lower was the earth and its life; there man

dwelt. The higher was heaven and its life; there God dwelt. If man would reach God he must somehow get up into that higher place; hence prayer, instinctively thought of as ascending, smoke of sacrifice, the upturned face, the uplifted hand, the upward-pointing church spire. If God would reach man, he must somehow come down; hence miracle, theophany, incarnation as past ages conceived them.

But ever since the time of Copernicus men have known that the true world view is not that picture of two parallel horizontal planes. Rather is it a great sphere. At the centre is experience—my experience and that of the race; and all about, stretching in every direction, is life, reality, knowledge, and mystery. Science has made the transition from the one world view to the other. Theology has not. It is far harder for religion than for science to make the change. Where is God in the new world view? Not up, for there is no up nor down. He is everywhere, within, without, above, below, all through the life of the world as we know it. Somehow the man or woman whose thinking is in terms of that spherical world view must learn

to see and know his religion from that viewpoint, else will there be hopeless conflict between his scientific knowledge and his religious faith.

We say God is in heaven. But where and what is heaven? Instinctively we look, grown men no less than children, to the blue sky over our heads. But where, in reality, is the sky? Sober thought instantly tells us that one might travel forever up and up and never find the sky. The sky, the heaven, is but the beautiful picture, formed as we look through the moisture-laden air, which is all about us. Where is the sky? It is everywhere: in it we live, and move, and have our being. So our God, though we picture him on high above that sapphire dome, is all about us; we live and move and are in him. One of the reasons why he seems at times less real to us than the sense objects about us is that these sense objects have fallen into place in this new sphere view of the world and our thoughts of God have not.

But there is a second aspect of this problem of faith and doubt. Back of these special difficulties lies the general question: *Why is it hard*

*to believe?* If religion, clear faith in God, is so important, so priceless, why has not God made the proof of it as clear and absolute as the proofs we meet in mathematics?

We may put the question in a different form: Why is it that the proof of religious realities comes only to those in sympathy with them, willing to believe? Why is it that "he that cometh to God must believe that he is," that proof is given to faith, not to unbelief? Why is it that no great allegation or claim of religion is so decisively proved that one cannot doubt if he will?

As a child I often wished that God would, in some way, write his name unmistakably on the sky that all men might be compelled to believe. And it was only in after years that the two reasons why he did not became clear to me; the first, that if he did so write his name on the sky, science would quickly find a "natural" explanation, in terms of law, of cause and effect; and the second, that he has already written his name there, and men will not believe. "Lift up your eyes on high and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their

host by number: he calleth them all by their names; by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth."

There is one simple, decisive answer to the question: Why has not God given us unmistakable proof of religious realities? It is this: To give such proof would destroy the value of faith.

So far as we can read God's aim in making us and in making this world to be our home, it is not to make us intellectually satisfied but to make us spiritually strong. Therefore he sets us in a world which perpetually baffles and challenges us. Life is constructed on a basis of adventure. A man must risk something, must take a chance, else is there no moral value in his faith. Study Browning's poem "La Saisiaz" if you would find a wonderful outworking of this thought. Faith is above all, at its heart, in its richest manifestation, not clear sight of a fact but firm choice of an alternative. Professor Rufus Jones gives a definition of faith which has inspiring truth in it: "The will to act as though we knew for the sake of an end which we seek." That is the spirit as to which Robert Louis

Stevenson raises the question: "If this were faith?" The supreme value of the act of faith is in that thought "as though." That necessitates lack of absolute proof, does it not?

Is faith, then, all guesswork, fancy? Are there no reliable tests of reality? Indeed, there are real and reliable tests which we can apply for the purpose of discovering whether this or that which claims to be truth is worthy of our faith. William James tells us that the real tests of spiritual truth are three: "Immediate luminousness, rationality, and moral helpfulness." I venture to add a fourth—social value.

To put these more concretely and practically, there are four questions you may and should ask with regard to any religious doctrine or spiritual affirmation the truth of which you would test:

1. Is it clearest to me when I am at my best?

2. Does it fit in with, or at least not antagonize, my necessary thinking in other parts of my thought life?

3. Does it prove able to inspire and control my conduct?

4. Does it tend to identify me with the world's best struggle and life?

These are not such proofs as come from the laboratory or the mathematical text-book. No! For they deal with different realities. They are better proofs, thank God! The real meanings and values of life are presented to you for your choice, not for a mechanical assent. You will be a believer or an unbeliever according as you choose to be the one or the other. Which is the better, on the whole?

Did you ever see a believer sorry for his faith or an unbeliever glad of his unbelief? The fundamental concern for a true man is that he shall not claim beliefs beyond his real faith. But it is folly to wait for a scientific demonstration of that which science cannot prove.

There is true wisdom in the words: "Of two unprovable alternatives, in regard to the existence or nature of a possible fact, that alternative is most rationally believed which satisfies the highest type of normal human beings; and, being accepted, only that life is rational which lives *absolutely* as if that alternative were true."

God honors us by asking us to choose his truth in the face of doubts.

"Whoso hath felt the power of the Highest
Cannot confound, nor doubt Him, nor deny;
Yea, with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I."

## GOD AND OUR RELATION TO HIM

THE heart of theology is our thought about God; and the heart of religion is our life with him. What shall we believe about God? There are many who find an answer ready and easy. Their hearts respond with quiet satisfaction to what their fathers or teachers or trusted friends have told them of God. Such are, indeed, as Tennyson says, "thrice blest."

But there are many to-day whose hearts cannot be at rest while their minds are at sea; and they cannot readily accept old statements about God. New questions have arisen as they have looked at the life of the world in the new light of modern science and philosophy. What can they honestly and unreservedly believe about God?

This fact they may realize first of all—and there is comfort in it—that ideas of God have changed, and must change, with varying conceptions of reality, with changing ideals of life.

It is simple fact that *every advance in knowledge makes inevitable some change in the idea of God.* It is a sublime statement of the Scriptures that "God made man in his own image." It is almost as true that man has ever been making God in his own image. It is only when we shall have become like him that we shall see him as he is.

To a thoughtful reader of the Bible this change in the idea of God is very evident. We open its early pages, and we see Abraham possessed with the idea that God wants him to kill his son as a sacrifice, and Jephthah offering the life of his daughter that God may give victory to his army, and David putting to death the descendants of Saul that a famine may be relieved. On those early pages Jehovah is, indeed, and not merely in name, "a man of war." What a change takes place in the progress from such an ideal to the vision of "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is not willing that any should perish"!

Now that which is so clearly marked in the Bible and so true for the thought life of the race is true for each one of us. Much of our

doubt and trouble about the idea of God springs from the fact that we do not make sufficient allowance for the change in our conception of God which inevitably accompanies the broadening and deepening of our minds. In the case of any real, growing student, the thought of God must either grow or be left behind.

Sam Walter Foss has the true view in his verses entitled "Two Gods":

I

"A boy was born 'mid little things,
Between a little world and sky,
And dreamed not of the cosmic rings
'Round which the circling planets fly.

"He lived in little works and thoughts,
Where little ventures grow and plod,
And paced and ploughed his little plots,
And prayed unto his little God.

"But, as the mighty system grew,
His faith grew faint with many scars;
The cosmos widened in his view,
But God was lost among his stars.

II

"Another boy in lowly days,
As he, to little things was born,

But gathered lore in woodland ways,
And from the glory of the morn.

"As wider skies broke on his view,
God threatened in his growing mind;
Each year he dreamed his God anew,
And left his older God behind.

"He saw the boundless scheme dilate,
In star and blossom, sky and clod;
And, as the universe grew great,
He dreamed for it a greater God."

These changes, of course, are largely in form, in idea. Below them all there lies a persistent instinct, giving reality and intensity to all our thoughts about God. It may become clearer to us if we recall its sources. It is not hard to discover them. The same instincts send us searching after God to-day that were at work when

"The first man stood God-conquered
With his face to heaven upturned!"

Four sources of our idea of God are very definite and plain.

1. We have *a sense of external power.* Man is conscious of power residing in himself. He

can will and act. But his will meets other power that thwarts or helps. His action is in the presence of other activity. He is conscious of the presence of power that is neither his own nor that of men like himself. Perhaps this primal instinct has not been better expressed than in the saying of Herbert Spencer, that man finds himself ever "in the presence of an infinite and eternal energy, from which all things proceed."

2. We have also a clear consciousness of *intelligence in the universe*. There is more than power about us. There is control, intelligence, purpose. Things are not merely moving; they move with precision, in order, on lines of cause and effect. The fact that law is discoverable in nature sets us searching for God. It is one of the strangest of obsessions that has led some to think that the presence of invariable natural law makes God less necessary. The more smooth-running a machine, the greater the evidence of intelligence in its making. A great truth is set in striking phrase when some one declares that "every machine is simply objectified thought." The whole universe is "ob-

jectified thought." It is natural to seek to know the thinker. The very possibility of constructing a science implies intelligence in the constitution of things.

3. We recognize clearly also the presence of *moral sense in man and of moral order in history.* The conscience is as real and absolute a factor in man's nature as is the brain. The "eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness" is a more real and powerful factor in history than any great man or race. The life of which we are a part is not only existing and changing, it *tends* somewhither. Why is it that we instinctively assume, in speaking of evolution, that it is, on the whole, a process of betterment?

4. Deepest and strongest of all the sources of our idea of God is *our personal experience.* When we think, when we work, when we pray, when we try to live with our own souls, we find something, some one. We cannot grasp this hidden reality. That poem is vividly true in which Browning describes God as playing at hide-and-seek with us behind the shutters of a closed house. But the least mystical of us has some sense of a reality not ourselves. Even in this

day, when "the world is too much with us," we know what Wordsworth meant when he said:

"I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts;
A motion and a spirit that informs
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

The poet is our true leader in our attempts to express these vague but intensely real feelings. The heart of the race, groping after God, finds voice in the words of Tennyson:

"That which we dare invoke to bless;
Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt;
He, They, One, All; within, without;
The Power in darkness whom we guess;

"I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;
Nor thro' the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun;

"If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
I heard a voice 'believe no more'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

"A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd 'I have felt.'

"No, like a child in doubt and fear:
But that blind clamor made me wise;
Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near;

"And what I am beheld again
What is, and no man understands;
And out of darkness came the hands
That reach thro' nature, moulding men."

There is just such vagueness in our search for God: "He, they, one, all; the power in darkness which we guess; what I am; what is and no man understands." So the soul reaches out through the darkness after the unknown God. Yet here, too, is the reality, the certainty, of the impulse and of its answer. Dark though it is, a hand touches ours. Here, in personal experience, is the clearest source of our sense of God.

Now what shall we say of this great power, intelligence, stream of moral tendency without us and within us? How can we form a clear

idea, an effective symbol, of this deepest of all realities?

It might be well to pause here and set your mind at work discovering your own idea of God. In his great little book "The Idea of God," John Fiske gives a most interesting description of his first clear conception of God. Mrs. Browning has pictured in a little poem a child's thought of God. Many grown men and women have never put away childish things in their thoughts about God.

I need not stop to mention the varying forms the conception of God has taken in different ages of the world's life: polytheism, dualism, naturalism (or materialism), and the like. Only I beg you to look with sympathy on every honest effort of the human soul to find God, every honest effort, under whatever name or form, to give to this mystery about us, back of the world's life, a form through which we can draw near and find fellowship with the source from which our spirits come.

"Children of men! the unseen Power, whose eye
Forever doth accompany mankind,
Hath looked on no religion scornfully
That men did ever find.

Which has not taught weak wills how much they
can?
Which has not fall'n on the dry heart like rain?
Which has not cried to sunk, self-weary man:
*Thou must be born again!*"

Yet for us these thoughts of God are spent forces. The modern mind insists on unity.

Our problem and conflict spring out of the changed thought form of the world. In the last essay the difference was indicated in the contrast between parallel horizontal planes and a sphere. Somehow our thought of God must fit the sphere view. It is an intellectual and moral necessity that we think of God as immanent, everywhere. Yet we must in some way keep alive and strong our sense of personality in God. We must feel that he is not only the great energy but the great companion, else we have no religion.

Here is our problem, then: How can we have a thought of God which shall fit the sphere view and yet keep God real and personal? Our dangers lie along the paths of pantheism and agnosticism. It is easy to say that God is simply the sum of all things: "God is all, and

all is God." Such a thought of God undoubtedly fits the modern world view, the sphere conception, but it loses all sense of personality in God.

On the other hand, agnosticism gives up the problem, abandons the attempt to obtain a clear and satisfying idea of God. It declares that God is unknowable. Something is there, but no one can reach it, still less picture it. In agnosticism, as in pantheism, is an element of necessary and majestic truth. The ultimate truth about God is that he is unknowable. If choice must be made between the man confident that he holds "the whole counsel of God" in his "little systems" and the reverent agnostic who shuts his eyes and closes his lips in the presence of inscrutable mystery, by all means let me stand with the agnostic. He is nearer the spirit of the Bible; he is in tune with many of the noblest psalms and hymns and Christian poems; he is nearer the heart of reality.

What we want and need is to save that sense of "God in all things" which is so strong and true in the pantheist; and the sense of overwhelming mystery which is so strong and true

in the reverent agnostic; and yet, at the same time, to find in God the friend of our souls, to discover some firm path to a faith in the personality of God, a faith which can live harmoniously with our sense of his immanence and mystery.

There is such a path, sure and firm. We may call it Christian theism. The entrance to it is through this simple fact: *we have a right to think of God as essentially like our best selves, as personal.* It is the way of Jesus, who bade us, "When ye pray, say, Father," and who further said: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him." Your best thought of God will be what you know of man.

I say, *we have a right* to think of God as essentially like our best selves. I mean this; in so thinking we are doing *exactly what the scientist does* in every branch of scientific investigation and thought.

It is not only God that is unknowable; it is everything deep and real, all that lies within the shell of things. Kant showed that once for

all. Bergson is brilliantly repeating the proof. What do we know of the ether? Of electricity? Of life? Of the human spirit? Everything save the shell of existence escapes our accurate knowledge. The senses deal only with the clothes of reality; science gets no more than the cast-off garments left in her grasp as life and time press impatiently forward.

But do we stop and turn away, content to say: "Reality is unknowable, unreachable"? It would be the end of all science if we did. This is what we do in the case of all our knowledge and research: *form a working hypothesis* of the unknown reality and use it as if it were true. Admitting that absolute knowledge is unattainable, we yet attempt a definition, test it, and, if it works, act as if it were absolutely true.

It is not too much to say that modern science rests, for one of its foundations, on the hypothesis of the ether. Men know nothing of the ether, nothing that can be put in precise terms. But the facts of life which they do know bring them face to face with some mysterious reality; and they find they must attempt a definition, frame a working hypothesis, to account for the

facts. That hypothesis of the ether is absurd, self-contradictory. Here is what an English scientist has lately said of it:

"The ether offers to passage through it no appreciable resistance; it is able to exert a strength of resistance when the most skilfully forged steel would snap like tow. We are dependent upon it as the faithful bearer of the heat and light of sun and stars; it alone makes possible the development of electrical forces that play so great a part in every-day life. But it remains unknown, impalpable, the necessary condition of scientific thought. None the less it is an entity, having an existence as real as ourselves."

That contradictory hypothesis is accepted by the scientist because it is the *necessary condition* of the intelligent pursuit of his work.

Are we not doing precisely what the scientist does when, realizing and freely admitting that God is, in the last analysis, unknowable, yet finding certain phenomena of undoubted reality and importance in our own life and the life of the world which demand a clear idea of God, we form a *working hypothesis* and, finding that

it fits the facts, hold it as if it were absolutely true?

"God unknowable"? Yes, if you mean that we cannot hold him within definitions. No, if you mean that we cannot touch him in experience. God is "not darkness, but light." Mr. Chesterton gives us the right interpretation of the mystery of God when he compares him to the sun, "the one object in the world at which we cannot steadfastly gaze, yet in the light of which we see everything else." Bergson voices a simple and absolute truth when he reminds us that the more *real* anything is the more impossible definition of it is. It is far easier to define a chair than a book, and easier to define a book than a mind. Browning says of the two great facts, God and Soul:

"*Prove* them facts? That they o'erpass my power
of proving proves them such:
Fact it is I know, I know not something which is
fact as much."

So let us do as the scientist does, form a working hypothesis of the unknowable reality we call God. That is, we must think of God

in terms of *something we know.* There are just two great classes into which the objects of our knowledge fall. We call them matter and spirit; we may better speak of them as the impersonal and the personal. Which shall we use in defining God? Shall we think of him as essentially like matter or like spirit? Must we not use the higher? And can any one doubt which that is? Personality is the highest reality we know, the crown of life as we know it. Then I come nearest to the truth about God when I define him in terms of personality.

God is more like me than like matter. That is the basal truth, a working hypothesis which I can accept with absolute confidence. The reality I am seeking breaks through all definitions; but I have a right to think of God as essentially like man, as spiritual (and spirit means personality; talk of "impersonal spirit" is self-contradictory nonsense). Personality comes nearest to reality and therefore nearest to God.

In a real sense every human being is unknowable, a mystery we cannot fathom. In that mystery of the human spirit—beyond our ken,

yet within our practical reach; indefinable, yet full of rich capacities of friendship—is our best idea of God.

We are aware, of course, that to think of God as like our best selves is crude and inadequate. God is infinitely beyond our highest thoughts of him. What does the dog know of his master? Very likely he thinks of him as a wiser, stronger, more wonderful sort of dog. Yet that crude idea serves to keep him faithful and in touch with the master.

We stand on solid ground, then, when we define God in such terms as William Newton Clarke uses: "God is the personal spirit, perfectly good, who in holy love creates, sustains, and orders all."

What of our relation to God? "Speak to him, thou, for he hears, and spirit with spirit can meet." Largely our relation with the personal spirit of the world is in the form of prayer. But that is so vital and important a part of religious experience and faces so many questions of its own that we may better consider it by itself. It is enough now to say this general word: religion, real fellowship with God, comes

to us only as we relate ourselves to him, not as an object of knowledge, but as an object of experience. The satisfaction of the mind is in order to the satisfying of the heart. If a student wants to do good work and find real joy in college life, he will do well to send for a catalogue and come to know in advance what the life of the college is. But, after all, the vital thing in a college experience is not the knowledge of the catalogue but the experience of college; "*going* to college," as we say. The vital thing in religion is *going* to God, finding him a reality in experience. The true good of religion comes to you when you know God not as you know facts but as you know persons. Tolstoi has voiced a great and necessary truth in the words: "It is not the mind by which we know God; it is life through which we come to know him."

Ruskin once told a body of students that no teacher could give them gold; the most he could do was to give them the tools and show them where to dig. Our intellectual approach to God does no more than that. You will find him only as you seek him out for yourself. These poor tools of word and argument are soon

blunted and broken. But they will bring you to him if you work earnestly with them.

We are quite wrong in thinking that Jesus was merely putting one thought in three forms when he said: "Ask, seek, knock." He was describing a process by which we enter into life with God. Do you wish something from God? "Ask." But how can I find him in order to ask? "Seek." But I find only a hard wall, a closed door. "Knock, and it shall be opened." Only when you persist until you enter and live with him do you find a true religious experience. The greatest of the arts and the most difficult and delicate is the art of living with God.

If one asks, "How shall I seek to live with God?" two simple answers may be given. The first is what is commonly known as "practicing the presence of God." Remind yourself continually that the Personal God, your Friend, is with you. Cultivate the habit of talking with him. Devise simple means of reminding yourself of his presence. One of the richest expressions of personal religion in the Old Testament comes from the heart of a man who says: "I have *set* the Lord always before me."

The second answer is: "Seek him in the common, human fellowship of worship." We dwarf the great word of Jesus, "When two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," when we use it merely as an antidote for depression at slimly attended services. It is a statement of the great fact, or principle, that God is realized through united worship as he cannot be by the lonely soul.

Here are the two great means of finding God and living with him in a real fellowship: the practice of his presence, the participation in social worship. Use these great means. Seek and keep seeking; knock and keep knocking; till you find your way into God's home and abide with him there. Each must find his own way into that home. The holy of holies in your heart is closed to all save God and the high priest.

"O, could I tell; ye surely would believe it;
O, could I only say what I have seen!
How should I tell, or how can ye receive it;
How till He bringeth you where I have been!"

# PRAYER

IN the last essay, "God and Our Relation to Him," the second part of the topic was touched but lightly. For our relation to God in prayer is so vital and practical a part of our religion, so much the very heart of it, that it seemed better to give a separate treatment to the art of praying. One would like to talk maximums, not minimums, about prayer; to present its highest ideal, not its bare beginnings; to talk of its spiritual meaning rather than of its intellectual and theological basis. But I am dealing with those who need a reasoned conviction with which to start; I am trying to show openings, beginnings; and I must be content to show, if I can, very simply and quietly, the reasonableness of prayer.

It is just here, at the very heart of practical religion, that doubts cluster thickest. It is easy to see why prayer seems uncertain or unnatural to the prevailing temper of our age. There are

several outstanding causes for this attitude. First may be mentioned the very strong sense of *the invariability of natural law* which possesses our age. It is hard, in the face of this tendency, to hold to the personality of God, and harder to talk naturally with him, or expect answers to our prayers.

It may be true, doubtless it is, as Tennyson reminds us, that

"if He thunder by law, the thunder is still His voice";

but the fact that he thunders by law does make it harder to detect the voice amid the noise than it was for the poet who wrote, in the twenty-ninth Psalm, of the majesty of God's voice in the storm.

How different our problem is from that of the men in Bible days! To them every act and part of life was miraculous. They had little or no sense of natural law. When everything that happened was conceived as coming by a direct, unconnected act of God's will, it was easy and natural to pray to him in all things. When it rained, God was opening the windows of heaven and pouring out the blessing of the shower.

What more natural, in time of drought, than to cry to him to send the rain. But the mind of our day knows not how to break through the marvellous web of close-woven law and can hardly conceive that God can break through it. Perhaps the men of ancient days were nearer truth than we are; perhaps we may return some time to the sense of immediacy in God's action and see the present sense of the invariability of natural law as a passing obsession; perhaps Mr. Chesterton is right, and that God every day says to the sun: "Get up; do it again." But, whatever the thoughts of the future may be, just now we are under the rule of this conception of all-embracing natural law, beneficent, invariable, and it is hard to see how our personal wishes and prayers can avail to affect such an intricate, all-comprehending system of law.

Another cause of the prevailing doubt about prayer is our deepened sense of the unity, wisdom, and good-will of God. Even those of us who hold to the personality of God and see that natural laws are but his ways of working find it hard to pray. For God is always good, always

works for the best, always knows best. What place is there, then, for the plea that he shall do for me or for others what I feel to be best? Does not prayer die away into quiet contentment, or passive acquiescence in his will and care?

But strongest of all the causes of the prevalent uncertainty about prayer is the *unreality of the spiritual.* To the temper and mind of our age the things of the senses are very real, while the things of the spirit struggle hard to clear themselves of the accusation of unreality. We are only just beginning to emerge from a period in which the senses have held unquestioned sway. It is still too true that

> "Things are in the saddle,
> And ride mankind."

This makes prayer seem unreal, a performance, an attempt to make ourselves believe that mystic communings with our own deeper selves are real intercourse with God.

It is just here in our praying that the psychological doubt of which we spoke in the opening essay is most powerful in its influence.

Most people, all but the happy few who are by nature mystics, not self-critics, feel the haunting doubt: "Am I really talking with God, or just communing with my own soul? Does my prayer touch something, some one, outside myself, or does it merely let me into deeper depths of my own being?"

That is a sensitive and puzzling question. The point of it hurts our hearts. For, if we come to the conviction that prayer is no more than self-communion, the value and power of it largely vanish. As Doctor Henry Sloane Coffin aptly suggests, prayer in such circumstances is almost as absurd as the conduct of the girl who wanted to be popular, and so

> "sat on the sand,
> And held her own hand,
> And never discovered the sell."

When I do as Jesus counselled, go into a quiet room and shut the door and pray, am I really meeting some one, not myself, or simply probing unknown places in my own soul?

It is the same difficulty here that confronts us everywhere in our religion; but it is sharper

here because prayer is so practical and vital an element of our life—our experience of religion.

We need to remind ourselves, then, that this psychological difficulty is not peculiar to our religious experience; it conditions all our thinking and living; all our knowledge is conditioned and mediated through our consciousness. How else can God meet us and answer our prayers than through our self-consciousness? We are not in the least invalidating our intercourse with God, or admitting an element of unreality in it, when we frankly admit, as we must, that it is practically impossible to distinguish between our own best self and the spirit of God. The New Testament makes no attempt to discriminate. "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit." "I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me." We must be content never to see clearly the line that marks God off from our best selves. Yet that does not mean that God is impersonal, a mere reservoir of subconscious power, which we turn on when we pray (a conception that seems involved in certain forms of "new thought"). The same confusion of identity meets us in all deep and real friendships.

Tennyson felt and expressed it in the case of his intercourse with his friend Arthur Hallam. We have a right to think God personal; and that means that we have a right to "talk with him as a man speaketh with his friend."

"Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and spirit with spirit can meet;
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

So intimate, so much a part of us, yet so vital and real and distinct is he! When Pompey invaded Judea, he made his way into the holy of holies, expecting to find there hid treasures, or at least a curious image. But he saw only a bare room. Yet the devout Hebrew knew that Jehovah was there, and that at times the Shechinah filled the room with glory. So the psychologist may find in your religious experience only your own best self; but you may know that God is there, in the holiest place. Practise the sense of his presence, covet and court a faith in the possibility of fellowship with him, and know that in so doing you are not deluding yourself into thinking fancies to

be facts but are making your way into the deepest and most glorious of truths.

Just because these facts and tendencies make it especially hard to find prayer natural in this age, the children of this age need to be the more instant and earnest in the culture of the prayer life. For prayer is the assertion to ourselves of the reality of the spiritual, of the personality of God; it is the protest of our souls against the mechanical theory of life; it is our witness to the light which most men see but dimly. As the man suddenly placed in some position of public prominence says to his soul, if he be wise, "You must be the more careful to preserve your personal, private, and family life now that the circumstances of your life threaten to reduce and circumscribe them," so must the true man and woman of to-day be the more faithful in prayer that this is a day of activity, of practical tests and standards, a day of the sons of Martha rather than of the sons of Mary.

We ask, then: Has prayer any real and practical power? Is it reasonable to hold that it has?

It might, at first thought, seem very easy to make a decisive test. So acute and honest a mind as that of Huxley was deceived into proposing, as a conclusive test of the power of prayer, that Christians should agree to pray for rain under conditions which scientists should adjudge unfavorable for rainfall. But the test is not so simple. Prayer has its conditions and tests no less than science. Many factors enter into the question, most of which Huxley's test would ignore.

When we look at prayer we see clearly that there are two elements in its problem: its power over material conditions, and its power over the human spirit. For convenience, we call the first *accomplishment* and the second *inspiration.*

I. *Accomplishment.* Does prayer do anything? Does it make a difference in things? Does it change circumstances and conditions? Does it cure illness? Or avert threatened danger? Or save a sinking ship? Or bring desired blessings?

Certainly the faith of the past was very sure that prayer had such power. A large part of

the "testimony" at prayer-meetings was composed of the reciting of "answers to prayer." It may be significant that the prayer-meeting has lost its vitality and importance as faith in the accomplishing power of prayer has faded. James tells us: "Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed, and the heavens were closed, and no rain fell." I recall a book in which my grandfather took great satisfaction, entitled "The Bank of Faith." It gave the striking experiences of a minister who prayed for whatever he needed or wanted and seldom or never failed to obtain what he asked. One scene from the book I recall vividly. The writer was on his way to some ecclesiastical gathering and was greatly ashamed of the old hat which he was wearing because he had no other. He knelt and prayed, and as he opened his eyes he saw a hat lying beside him, new, and an exact fit. My grandfather firmly believed in the truth of that incident; but it would be hard to find a man of his intelligence to believe such a story to-day. When a well-known evangelist tells of making use of prayer to get exactly the pattern of trousers on which he had

set his desires, some may be moved to faith, but more are moved to mirth. For most of us have lost our faith in such answers to prayer, because such uses of prayer seem to us unworthy almost to the point of indecency.

Yet extreme cases should not lead us to impatient reaction. The question whether prayer *does things* in the material world is more serious than is indicated in these cases. In answer to the question, "Has prayer power to affect outward conditions?" there is this, at least, to be said:

1. There are certain facts which point positively in the direction of an affirmative answer to the question. There are few men and women of vital religious experience who have not known personally of cases where surprising results followed and seemed to come from prayer. Instances of healing through prayer are abundant. No one can doubt the sincerity and sanity of Doctor Grenfell; yet his account of his rescue from the ice-floe reads like a miracle story from the Bible. He prayed, and help came, in a situation that seemed hopeless. The classic illustration of the practical power of prayer is

found in George Mueller's Homes. "The God that answers by orphanages, let him be God!" was Joseph Parker's picturesque putting of the proof; and it cannot be put aside easily. "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man" does seem to "avail much." Jesus taught us to pray for daily bread. He said, after a peculiarly difficult case of healing: "This kind can come forth by nothing save by prayer." Looking over the needy fields, he said: "*Pray* ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send forth laborers into his harvest." He seems to set his seal on the accomplishing power of prayer.

2. It is easy to see how inconclusive is the objection that the result does not always follow faithful prayer. It is of the very essence of prayer that it be personal, and it is of the very essence of personal intercourse that it be free, not mechanical. There are good, strong reasons, easy to discern, why prayer is not, and could not be, invariably successful. One reason is that this would put too dangerous a power in our hands. All of us can recall fairy-stories of people who were given their wishes; how often

their wishes were foolish, or proved a curse to them! If a man were assured that whatever he might ask in prayer he should unfailingly receive, he would, if wise, never ask anything again; for to put unlimited power in the control of limited wisdom would be a fearful curse.

Again, it would introduce a mercenary element into our religion, an element of bribery, to assure us that prayer would always bring the fulfilment of our desires. Satan would repeat his question: "Doth Job serve God for naught?" There would be a continual temptation to indolence, a cutting off of incentive. Is not the best that could be exactly that which Christian experience tells us is the fact—enough answers to prayer to encourage us and lead us to pray, but not enough to weaken or endanger or bribe us? "If ye, then, being evil, *know how* to give *good things* to your children"—there, in that simple but perfect analogy, is the true setting of God's answers to our prayers.

3. We may well consider a question lately raised in an interesting and original study of the gospel.* May it not be, is it not probable,

* "Christ's Message of the Kingdom," by Hogg.

that God can do for and through one who prays what he cannot do for and through the prayerless? A father can accomplish desirable things for an obedient and loving son which he could not accomplish if the son were unresponsive or disobedient. God respects our freedom, his noblest gift to us. Surely he can do in and through and for us, if we are willing, if our wills are co-operating with him, more than he can do if we are setting our wills athwart his own.

These thoughts should at least give us pause, as we are about to throw over the faith that prayer *makes a difference* in material and outward conditions. We cannot be sure that we shall get what we ask, without fail. But there is reason for our praying with confidence, asking God for whatever we believe we need.

But if any are unconvinced, as many will be, is there no vital and helpful message for them about prayer? The main meaning and worth of prayer is wholly independent of the question whether prayer achieves results in the outward realm. If you cannot be persuaded that prayer has such power, then cease praying for such objects; say to yourself that such results of

prayer are comparatively unimportant and that ninety per cent or more of the value of prayer lies in another realm of experience.

It is shame to us all that we tend to think and talk as if the value of prayer were to be determined in the main by the power there may be in it to *get things from God.* That is a small, unimportant, and rather questionable part of its value. What would we think of a boy who should estimate the value of his relationship with his father chiefly in terms of the things his father gave him? Such a Christmas-present standard is pitifully cheap and unworthy for any good home. How much more unworthy is it of God's relation to us? Religion is personal relationship with God. Prayer is our intercourse with God. Is it not mean and low to test its value and power by the things it enables us to get from him? Is it not an added meanness if in our thought is any taint of "special privilege," whereby we secretly rejoice that through prayer we can get what others lack, that we have a sort of secret influence with God, a private "pull," that brings us special favors?

What is prayer, in its deepest and highest meaning? One of the best answers I have ever heard was given me by a boy: "Prayer is promising God I will do my best, and trusting him to do what I can't."

There is the real and deep truth; prayer is co-operation of our will with God's will. We never begin to look at prayer rightly until we begin to see that every prayer is a pledge. It is a shame to beg God to do something I might do if I would! It is disgraceful to make of my praying a substitute for personal effort and sacrifice and suffering. The catechism gets but a little way into the real nature of prayer when it defines it as "an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will." It would be nearer the heart of it to say: "Prayer is an offering up of *ourselves* unto God, for the doing of his will."

Look at the Lord's Prayer thus, as a pledge, a set of statements of what we shall, with God's help, try to do and reach and live for, and a new light breaks forth from it.

When we look at the sayings of Jesus about prayer, we find them strongly setting forth this

idea that prayer is a promise. He did say, of the stubborn demon: "This kind can come forth by nothing save by prayer." But it was in answer to the question of the disciples: "Why could not we cast it out?" Clearly the power of prayer was in strengthening them for the task. He did say, in view of the painful need of laborers: "Pray the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth laborers." But then, at once, he began to call the twelve and send *them* out, to begin the answer to their own prayers. O what a serious matter it is to *pray*, for missions, for the kingdom of God, for the relief of the poor and ignorant! Shall I ask God to have mercy on those to whom I might show kindness if I would? Shall I invoke his aid when I am unwilling myself to do and give my best?

Prayer is more than a pledge, it is an expression of confidence, a cry to God to make me better and more powerful. The one answer to prayer that never fails is *strength in the soul.* The greatest verse in the Bible about prayer and its answer, is it not this: "In the day I called thou didst answer me; thou didst encourage me with strength in my soul"?

See what a strong light is thrown on this conception of prayer by the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: "Be not anxious for the outward things, for after these do the nations seek; but your Father knoweth that ye need these things; seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness." He is talking about our prayers, and he says: Do not be thoughtful chiefly about material things when you pray; leave those to the knowledge and good-will of the Father. Set first among the objects of your prayer his kingdom and righteousness; and all the rest shall be added unto—what? Your store? No; but unto *you*. Pray to God to make *you* right, and other things will be added.

Here is the deep, true basis of fact about the power and value of prayer. Always God is ready to strengthen the soul that prays. It may be that the minister who wrote "The Bank of Faith" did get a new hat, and the evangelist the kind of trousers he wanted, in answer to prayer. But the nobler prayer would have been: "O God, set me so upon thy work that I care not what I wear." That sort of prayer

God always answers. And nobler than the magic that brings a new hat is the grace to wear the old hat with dignity and unselfconsciousness.

Among the many prayers which we find in the life and letters of Paul, we find just two, so far as I am aware, in which he made particular requests for himself. In one he asked that the thorn in the flesh might be taken from him. In the other he asked his fellow Christians in Rome to pray that he might be spared trouble at the hands of the Jews in Jerusalem and be brought prosperously to Rome. Both requests failed of being granted. The thorn remained, and the Jews nearly took his life, caused weary years of imprisonment, made him reach Rome in chains, and led him to his death. Yet Paul knew that the deeper prayer was gloriously answered in each case. The thorn was not removed, but he heard the Lord say, "My grace is sufficient"; and he learned to "glory in his infirmities." He reached Rome in chains, yet his brave heart realized that his bonds were "rather in furtherance of the Gospel," and he found that "the Lord stood by him."

Here is the real and noble answer to prayer. It was a wonderful answer to prayer when Doctor Grenfell was saved from the ice-floe. But a thousandfold greater and nobler answer to prayer is the life he has lived, the service he has rendered there in Labrador, year after year. Grace and strength in the soul is the real result of prayer. Prayer did give Jesus power to cast out the demon; but infinitely greater was the work of prayer of which Sidney Lanier sings:

"Into the woods my Master went, clean forspent.
Out of the woods my Master went, well content."

It was prayer that wrought the difference, that changed and can always change a spent soul into a soul content, well-knit, conscious of divine grace sufficient for all things.

If you cannot believe or realize that prayer can affect outward conditions, let them go for the unimportant things they are and devote your prayers to asking from God the refreshing, the inspiring of your own soul through personal fellowship with him. Then one of two things will come to pass: either you will come to find it natural to pray for the outward things or you will cease to care much about them.

While our concern is with the intellectual or theological basis of our faith in prayer rather than with the practice of it, a simple word or two about its use may be of help. We need to remember that prayer is less a native instinct than an art. It is natural to the human soul, a normal exercise; but it is like walking and talking rather than like breathing and eating. The child begins to breathe and eat at birth; but he learns to walk and talk with some pains.

To remember that prayer is an art rather than a native gift will help us to meet the feeling of its unnaturalness. Many say: "It is useless for me to try to pray; it seems so unnatural. I can't make it seem real." Just as foolish would it be for the little boy to say: "I can never play the violin; my fingers move stiffly; it is unnatural." Yes; but if he will persevere, at last he will break through into the artist's delight and ease. And we must persevere in the pursuit of the *art* of prayer. Is not that what Jesus meant by his strange words about importunity? Certainly it is the deep meaning of his command: "Ask, seek, knock." There is

in that command, we have seen, no mere repetition of the same thought. Jesus did not so waste words. Prayer is *asking*. But to ask you must find God. "Seek, and ye shall find." But you seek, and find only a wall, a closed door. "Knock, and it shall be opened." You must get inside God's home, find your way, knock, and be admitted to live with him; then you can pray as instantly as the child asks his mother for what he needs.

It is well, too, that we be careful to remember the value of social prayer, common worship. Protestant religion has gone to an extreme in its reaction from the former emphasis on the *church*, till it has obscured the value of common prayer. Our Lord taught us to pray, "*Our* Father." He promised a special manifestation of his presence "when two or three are gathered together in his name."

But the main fact about prayer which we men and women of to-day need to take to heart is the fact that its chief, well-nigh its whole value is not in its being a means of *getting things*, but in that it is a means of *renewing the strength*, gaining the grace of God in the soul. "They that

wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength"; that is the best answer to prayer.

Is not that what we should expect as a result of intercourse with God? If he is the Great Person, the Great Friend, then the chief value of fellowship with him must be the freshening of soul which personal intercourse with him secures to us. It was said of Lord Chatham: "No man ever entered his private office who did not come out a stronger man." Of one of the leading educators of the last generation, the one who knew her best writes: "Any one on whom she turned her great eyes went out from her presence renewed. Those who approached her, even casually, gained power and peace." When Phillips Brooks was at the height of his influence as pastor of Trinity Church, in Boston, one of the morning papers had a note to this effect: "Yesterday opened cloudy and depressing, but about noon Phillips Brooks came down-town and everything cheered up."

If such influence can be gained and wielded by men, weak and faint reflections of the divine, how much more may we be sure that intercourse with God will renew our strength,

rekindle our joy, and fill us with grace to live and to dare?

"Lord, what a change within us one brief hour,
Spent in Thy presence, can prevail to make!
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take!
What parched fields refresh as with a shower!
We kneel, and all about us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;
We kneel, how faint; we rise, how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others, that we are not always strong;
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or faithless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?"

## THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

THE doctrine of the divinity of Christ—that the man Jesus was and is the Son of God—is central and fundamental in Christian faith. There may be, there surely are, religions without that faith; we may even admit that there are religions which are strong and helpful, that bring men truly to God and prove a power in conduct, which lack this belief. Judaism, before Jesus came, and since he came also, is such a strong and helpful religion. Unitarianism of the extreme type, which frankly classes Jesus altogether with other men, has produced leaders of unquestionable moral power, men whose religious reality is beyond doubt. Some time ago appeared in the *Hibbert Journal* certain sermons, delivered in the mosques of Constantinople by Mohammedan preachers, in which one could not help discerning real moral and religious value.

But the Christian religion at its heart is a faith that "God was in Christ." And the

Christian, while gladly acknowledging the worth of other religious experience, feels sure of two facts: first, that the power which is in them is due to some touch of the Christ faith, some broken ray from the "light that lighteth every man," some dim sense of the Christ who is so real and great that he is foreshadowed in many religions; and, secondly, that he, the Christian, has a power, a light, a joy, which the others do not possess, that he actually comes nearer to God and has a richer and more fruitful experience of him for seeing him "in Christ."

If we would see what difference the faith of Christ makes in a life religious but not Christian, we have only to compare what we know of Saul the Pharisee with what we find in Paul the Apostle. Paul was a righteous and a zealous servant of God before his conversion to Christianity. But what a change that experience produced in him! How much richer were his faith and life after he knew God in Christ Jesus!

What do we mean by the divinity of Christ? It may not be easy for us to answer clearly.

There are some good people in this day (I suspect there are many) to whom the definitions and proofs of Christ's divinity which were satisfactory of old have ceased to have true worth. It is not that the old statements are felt to be untrue so much as that they are felt to be unreal and inadequate. There was a long period during which it meant something real and vital to declare that Jesus Christ was the Son of God in that he was "of one substance with the Father." But that phrase is meaningless to many minds to-day, for they think no longer in terms of "substance"; they are idealists; they think in terms of mind and spirit. Once it was felt to be an adequate statement to say that in Christ there are "two natures in one person." But there are many thoughtful men and women to-day to whom that statement has become not untrue so much as unintelligible. It seems to them mere words with which there are no realities to correspond in the world they know.

If such a man asks, What do you mean, simply and really, by the divinity of Christ? we may give him a satisfying and helpful answer

by saying that we mean, practically, two things: 1. That we find God in Jesus as we find him nowhere else. 2. That we give Jesus the loyalty of our souls to an extent to which we would not dream of going in the case of any other leader.

1. *We find God in Jesus as nowhere else.* When we would picture God to our minds, call him before our souls as we pray, think of him as Father and Friend, we find that the simplest and most deeply satisfying idea of him is to think of him in terms of Jesus. He is the most satisfying revelation, or symbol, of God which we can find. This means, as some one has well phrased it: "Not that God is only in Jesus, but that he is always and everywhere like Jesus." It means that we believe that God so showed his essential nature and character in Jesus that we can confidently interpret all his workings in the spirit of that life of Jesus.

2. *We yield our souls to him as to no other.* History is rich with the names and personalities of great men, leaders, teachers, prophets. We recognize something of God in each of them. They claim a degree of reverence and obedience

from our spirits. But this, so shadowy and imperfect in each of them, comes to its climax, to perfection, in Jesus. Here we believe God is revealed as fully as he can be in terms of human life and personality, as fully as human minds can receive the revelation. And we yield absolute and joyous obedience to his judgments, his ideals, his lordship. Faith in the divinity of Christ means, practically, that, for our personal relations with God and for our personal conception of him, "God" and "Christ" are interchangeable terms.

Theology has attempted to go further. Possibly theology needs to go further. But that is as far as we need to go or can go for a practical faith. Those two elements make up our real faith in the divinity of Christ.

Now how dare we make such assertions with regard to any man? Suppose we were confronting an audience of intelligent Mohammedans, with their ingrained zeal for the unity and transcendence of God. How could we defend our claim, and win their acceptance of it, that Jesus is God to us in our personal, religious thinking, worship, and service? How justify the

confident assertion of our faith that "God at one time took complete possession of a human frame instead of partial possession"? It is a tremendous claim to make and demands ample justification.

There are two main lines of approach to a faith in the divinity of Christ. We may call them "The Approach from Below" and "The Approach from Above," or "The Approach from Man's Side" and "The Approach from God's Side."

In other words, there are two questions we can ask, the answers to which will help us to see why it is reasonable to call Jesus divine. They are:

1. *What is there in God which warrants our expecting him to reveal himself in a man?*

2. *What is there in Jesus which warrants our assertion that God did so reveal himself in him?*

These are the two lines along which the gospel thinkers and writers approach the divinity of Christ. We find the Synoptic Gospels moving mainly along the one line, while the fourth Gospel takes the other road. We open the

Synoptic Gospels and find ourselves in the presence of a man, Jesus of Nazareth; his genealogy is traced back for us to Adam, "the Son of God," as if to indicate a divine inheritance coming to Jesus through his human ancestry. We are set face to face, as were the earliest disciples, with the human figure of Jesus, in order that, living with him and coming to know him, we may attain to a faith in his oneness with the Father.

But when we open the fourth Gospel we find a different starting-point for faith. We stand in the eternal world, thinking of God and of his effort to reveal himself. We discern in him, from the beginning, something, the "Logos," the "Word," which must find its full expression in humanity, which ever strives through the ages to make God known to his children; and we see that "Logos" coming definitely and objectively into human history and experience in the man Jesus. "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us."

So we come to see that there is that in God which makes us say his best manifestation will be through a man; and there is that in Jesus

which leads us to exclaim with conviction: "Behold the man!"

I. *The Approach from God's Side.* Let us recall the argument for the personality of God to be found in a previous essay. The absolute God is, and must be, as scientific philosophers say, the unknowable, just as every "ding an sich" must be. But we have a right to interpret God, as we interpret other ultimate realities, in terms of something we know. We know two classes of existence, the impersonal and the personal. We know that the personal is higher than the impersonal, that spirit is higher than matter. Very well, then, we shall be nearest to reality when we interpret God in terms of spirit—personality. Does it not follow, then, that the *perfect man* would be the *highest possible revelation, or symbol, of God?* How can God reveal that he is personal, save in terms of personality? When we find one in whom dwells the fulness of humanity, we find in him also "the fulness of the Godhead bodily," all of God that can be put in terms intelligible to, appreciable by, human nature.

Of course, some insist that the divinity of

Christ means more than that God is in him just so fully as God can be in terms of humanity. But the plain answer is that when we get beyond that limit we are passing into the realm of pure theory and assertion, a realm which has no practical value for us. When a train has carried us as far as it can go it is no use to sit tight and insist that it ought to carry us farther. And that is as true of a train of thought as of a train of cars.

This is as far as intelligent thinking can go—that in Jesus God is revealed as fully as humanity can appreciate God, so that we say:

> "Thou seemest human and divine,
> The highest, holiest manhood, thou."

And when we say that with sincere faith, it will not be long before we go on and say:

> "Our wills are ours; we know not how;
> Our wills are ours, to make them Thine."

We have found our Lord and our God.

Here, then, are the steps by which we pass from our first and most abstract thought of God to the full richness of the Christian conception:

1. *God the Absolute*, the ultimate reality, unknown, "dwelling in light no man can approach unto."

2. *God revealing himself* through creation, manifesting himself through the various forms of existence just so far as each form can reveal his nature. God is in the crystal, in the vegetable, in the animal, to the extent that each is capable of receiving and expressing him. "The invisible things of him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made."

3. *God coming to fuller and nobler revelation* of himself in man, in his spiritual nature, his intelligence, his will, his conscience, his personality. "In him was life; and in man the life became light."

4. *God revealing himself supremely in the Perfect Man*, the ideal spirit, who is not simply "a man," but "the Son of Man," in whom the divine life that is in the world, seeking self-expression, comes to divine self-consciousness, realizing its oneness with the Father, "the flower of man and God."

II. *The Approach from Man's Side.* We start with the man Jesus, the historic figure that

meets us on the pages of the Gospel. What reason is there for calling him, in a unique sense, divine? What right have we to claim that in him, as in no other son of man, God brought to a climax his personal self-revelation?

Let us take nothing for granted. We are dealing, remember, with Mohammedans, or with men and women in some way not predisposed to faith in the divinity of any man, not trained to regard Jesus as the Son of God. How can we justify to them the unique claims we make for him? What proofs can we present that will come to them with convincing force?

We must realize and frankly admit, at the outset, that certain proofs of the divinity of Christ, relied on with confidence in former days and urged strongly, have lost their force as primary evidences of the divinity of Christ and have become of secondary importance. Such are the miracles he is said to have wrought, the fulfilment of prophecy in his career, and the supernatural beginning and ending of his life on earth.

Do not misunderstand. I am not saying that

these are not true, that the miracles of Christ, and his birth of a virgin, and his resurrection are unhistorical, or that he did not fulfil the prophecies of the Old Testament. I am not even admitting any doubt of their truth. I am not even saying that they are unimportant. I say that they cannot be used as *primary* proofs. I use the word "primary" as it is used in educational work, to mean that which must come first. Secondary schools are not less worthy than primary schools, but the primary must come first, or the secondary will not come at all. If one would get anywhere, the second step and the third are as necessary as the first. But he cannot take the second or the third step first.

It is in this simple sense that I say that the proofs formerly relied on—miracles, prophecy, virgin birth, resurrection—no longer have force as primary evidences of the divinity of Christ. These are not the matters with which to begin to prove, to a man not predisposed to belief, that Jesus Christ was and is the Son of God. They may have been primary proofs to the age to which Christ himself and his apostles came

with the gospel; for they came as facts to that age, confirmed by eye-witnesses, susceptible of immediate investigation and test. But a man or a woman of the modern, scientific temper will not believe the divinity of Christ because of these; he will come to believe these only if on other and primary grounds he has moved to a conviction that Jesus is divine.

What is there, then, in Jesus, in what he was and did and is, that warrants us in saying that he is divine? To put the answer in one word, it is himself. It is what he is, his character, personality, place, and influence.

We note a few special outstanding characteristics which create and nourish our confidence in his divinity:

The first is his *sinlessness*. You may say that we cannot be sure that he was without sin, for we have the record of but a few days, really but a few hours, out of his life. But I answer that sinlessness, as I am using the term, is not a matter of minute and microscopic examination; it is an atmosphere or quality which can be conclusively manifested in the general spirit of a life. Harnack has put the matter simply

but eloquently when he says that we find in Jesus "no break with his past." Other men, he says, come to a place where they burn what they had adored, and adore what they had burned. But Jesus shows no trace of moral change, no consciousness of lapse or failure, no sharp angles in the line of his life.

Other men, as they grow better, grow also more conscious of their imperfection. But Jesus reveals always a calm consciousness of perfect purity.

We might think that this is the manifestation of a shallow nature that thought lightly of sin and kept its eyes away from the shadows. Mrs. Eddy's light view of sin reflects the shallowness of her nature. But Jesus is the great revealer of the blackness and awful depth of sin. No teacher has ever been so clear and terrible, so mercilessly bright, in the light he shed upon sin. He took up the penalty men had thought fit for murder and said it was the rightful fate of hatred. He estimated the lustful desire as most men estimate the unchaste deed. Yet with it all he shows no trace of personal sorrow over sin, or sense of moral imperfection. Can

we find an explanation other than the words of Paul: "He knew no sin"?

A second impressive and convincing fact is the *absence of both doubt and aspiration.* Not that he did not grow, and face mental and moral problems, and make his way as we make ours. But at every step he is confident of life, of God, of himself. He never says: "I wish I were better; I have not attained." Ordinary men either accept the views of others, or painfully work out their own conclusions about duty, life, and God. The soul of Jesus was a radiant sun, in the light of which there could be no uncertainty.

It is characteristic of the very best men to discount their attainments. Emerson confessed that all his life he had been haunted by a "flying vision of the perfect" round which "his hands could never meet." We honor him for such a confession; but we worship Jesus because we feel that he never could have made such a statement. When he said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect," he spoke out of his personal experience.

The third fact of evidential force is the *high*

*claims* which Jesus made for himself. I am not now thinking of any claim to Messianic dignity, or to any external authority or position whatsoever. But what sort of man is it who can calmly say, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away," and the progress of the centuries only emphasize the sober truth of the claim? Who is this that in one breath can speak of acting "for righteousness' sake," and in the next moment say, "for my sake," as if he and righteousness were somehow identical? What man can stretch out his arms to the sinful and miserable of all places and ages, saying, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest," and not appear pitiful, ridiculous, insane in his egotism?

Yet his exquisite sanity and poise are worthy of mention as a fourth evidence of divinity. In him you find the supreme example of self-denial; yet there is not a trace of the unwholesome asceticism into which other self-denying saints have fallen. If you speak of spirituality, Jesus is the leader of all who have seen visions and dreamed dreams and walked through the world with a clear vision of God ever before

them. Yet he was devoid of the slightest taint of fanaticism. He was intense without bigotry. He frankly used the conceptions of his time and spoke directly to his own generation; yet his message is for the ages. We are just beginning to see his gospel of the kingdom as if it were newly promulgated to-day. In him is a miracle of balance, extreme sainthood that yet is perfect normality. Is there any other to stand beside him?

In addition to these personal qualities or characteristics which warrant our calling Jesus divine, there are other facts about his personality which the passing of the centuries has but brought out the more strikingly.

The way he fits into human history seems a decisive proof that God placed him there to reveal his glory more fully than it is revealed elsewhere. "If there be any meaning in history," asks Principal Fairbairn, "any moral order in the universe, can it be that Jesus stands where he does by accident?" He is like a lens fitly placed, to gather all the light from the sacred story of the past and project it down the long future.

Moreover, we cannot help being impressed with the growth of his influence upon the world with the passing of the years and centuries. Unlike physical bodies, his attraction seems to increase as the square of the distance. It is literally true that to-day, at this far remove from his bodily presence on earth, there are undoubtedly thousands who would die for him, and tens of thousands who say they find their life in his fellowship and strength. Can such a thing be said of any other man?

Closely associated with this fact is another—the universality of his appeal. Other heroes are limited in the number and kind of men to whom they appeal. Mr. Roberts, in "The Renascence of Faith" points out the fact that Oliver Cromwell would appeal to an Englishman far more strongly than to a Frenchman, and to a Puritan more powerfully than to a royalist. Even Lincoln does not appeal to all. But wherever Jesus comes, into whatever company, he wins men. The saints love his fellowship, and yet the sinners flock to his feet. Strong men and little children, the aggressive and the humble, the ignorant and the wise, all

feel that he is their especial friend. He appeals equally to the Oriental and the Occidental. He defies even the wide-cleaving difference of sex, for men and women equally are drawn into his friendship. It is true that "in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female."

Are we not justified in saying of such a personality what we would not dare say of any other of the sons of men—that he is our complete and final revelation of God, God to the fullest extent that men can know God?

The fact has been concisely and beautifully expressed by Professor William Adams Brown, in the words: "Jesus is the one human being in whose likeness we can conceive the unseen God, without involving ourselves in intellectual or moral confusion."

Matthew Arnold mocked the traditionalists of his day, accusing them of thinking of God as "simply an infinitely extended Lord Shaftesbury." His criticism was as just as it was keen. But the argument for the divinity of our Lord shines clear when we see that the very statement we could not make about Lord Shaftes-

bury without shame and confusion we can make about Jesus. It does not confuse, it clears and helps, when we think of God as "an infinite Jesus."

Thus the two lines of approach converge and meet. God bends down to reach man; man yearns upward toward God. And at last, as two electrodes, charged with the living current, meet and burst into a brilliant light at the point of contact, in which the latent energy finds glorious expression, so God and man stand revealed in the God-man, "the light that lighteth every man." Once come to know Jesus as he was, and more and more you will find the way to God leading through him. And life, eternal life, life worth while, will come to you as you yield yourself to him as to your God.

## THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

WE are told in the Gospel narrative that our Lord said once to his disciples: "The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it." We can readily understand the longing to which he refers. The disciples would come to many a place where, in their doubt and perplexity, they would say: "Oh, if only Jesus the Master were here again in the flesh!" If only they could see him and touch him, a concrete, objective reality! Yet it was expedient for them that he should go away, that they should learn to rely on the spirit, not on the flesh; on the inward principle, not on the outward fact.

There come times in our experience when we long for the definite, precise faith of our fathers. They were so sure of what they believed. Our faiths seem so large and vague, so far beyond our sight and touch.

This is true especially with reference to our view of the Bible. It is very easy for men of modern mind to contrast very unfavorably their conception of the Bible and of its inspiration with the clear, sharp definitions which the men of former generations held. The view the men of the olden day took of the Bible was so precise and well-defined. They regarded it as a book direct from God, as literally from him in its form as if it had been let down from heaven. Every statement in it, religious, moral, historical, scientific, philosophical, was taken as exactly accurate. No mistake of any sort could be found in it "from cover to cover." All the material in it came from the Spirit of God, perfect in thought and in word; all was on one great, level table-land of inspiration. Every verse was authoritative. The book stood out the one absolutely perfect and orderly object in a world of confusion and incompleteness.

It was a very comfortable belief. One could lie down and rest on such a Bible. A good many did. Open the book anywhere, read a verse at random, and you are in the presence of divine authority. It is not to be wondered at

that many feel lost when forced to believe that the Bible is not such a book. A man who was just coming to close quarters with modern views of the Bible wrote to me: "I feel as I felt once when lost on the prairies of Montana, without a path, or a tree, or any outward object to guide me over the trackless waste; only the stars above." It was hard for him to remember that God has always guided men most surely by the everlasting stars.

The word "inerrant" may well be used to denote the Bible as our fathers conceived and believed it to be.

Now, it is simple statement of fact to say that, for a great many, belief in an inerrant Bible has become impossible. No one need raise objection to the belief in an inerrant Bible, if men can hold such a belief intelligently and honestly. Doubtless, there are some, perhaps there are many, who so believe. But we must think of the matter from the point of view of those who cannot accept the dogma of the inerrancy of the Bible "from cover to cover." Even those who are undisturbed and comfortable in the possession of an absolute belief in the inerrancy

of the Scriptures should, for the sake of their influence, think seriously of the question: What are those to do who cannot so believe? Must they abandon their faith in the inspiration and authority of the Word of God? Have they lost their Bible? I, for one, am mightily concerned that those who honestly cannot believe in the inerrant Bible which their fathers cherished shall realize how little they have lost and how much remains of the preciousness and authority of the Scriptures; and that they shall not be suspected of infidelity, or looked upon as having lost their faith in the inspiration and authority of the Bible, but shall be met on the large, common ground of faith in the divine value and inspiration of the Word of God.

Let us look squarely, then, at the facts and forces which have been making it hard for many to believe in the inerrancy of the Bible.

There are three main outstanding forces which have powerfully affected belief in the Bible's inerrancy: historical criticism of the Bible, contact with other religions, and the prevailing spirit of inquiry.

First in importance is the historical and criti-

cal study of the Bible which has been so marked a feature of intellectual and religious life during the immediate past. We may welcome this study, or we may deplore it; we cannot deny its presence and power, nor can we ignore it. It alleges certain facts, and to many people it seems to prove what it alleges, or at least to leave reasonable doubts in their minds. And those who have made their own the great fundamental law of intellectual life—to accept heartily what one honestly believes to be fact—cannot shut their eyes to the results of historical and literary criticism of the Bible.

What are some of these results? We can touch on them but briefly and in the mass, indicating certain general classes of alleged results.

Biblical criticism tells us that we must rearrange much of our Biblical material and radically revise our traditional notions with regard to the authorship of its books. It tells us with confidence that the Book of Daniel comes from the time of the Maccabees, about 165 B. C. It dates the last half of the book of Isaiah from a time, or times, later than the age of Isaiah by two centuries or more.

The revision of our ideas that is demanded by Biblical criticism finds readiest illustration in the Pentateuch and the Psalms. In the uncritical years of the past it was assumed that "Moses wrote the Pentateuch and David the Psalms." It was not always easy to see how Moses could have written the account of his own death, or how David could have composed psalms dealing with the rebuilding of a temple which was not built at all until after his death, nor destroyed until some five centuries later than his era; but men seldom raised such troublesome questions.

Now critical students tell us that the Pentateuch and the Psalter are growths, collections—the one the great law book, the other the great hymn-book, or prayer-book—of the Hebrew race. They call our attention to laws clearly reflecting conditions that did not exist until long after the time of Moses. They exhibit the Pentateuch as a collection of codes and stories which grew through many centuries, taking final shape at some time after the great exile in Babylon. It is called the "Law of Moses," or the "Books of Moses," not as a precise indication of author-

ship but in recognition of the fact that the germ of it all, the spirit of Hebrew legislation, comes from the decisive time of the exodus, the wilderness training, and the first occupation of Canaan.

It may help to make vivid the conception of the Pentateuch offered by modern critical study if we imagine that some historian, or group of historians, should to-day compile a book by putting together, somewhat loosely, tales and anecdotes about the Pilgrim Fathers and other early settlers; the story of the Revolution; important documents relating to that story, such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States; decisions of the courts and statutes which have amplified, expanded, or interpreted that fundamental law, incorporating the later laws quite without distinction into the organic law; and should, in recognition of the supreme importance of the revolutionary period and of its hero, give to their production the title, "The Books of Washington." That would be, roughly, an American parallel to the Hebrew "Books of Moses."

Similarly we might compare the origin and development of the psalms with the origin and

growth of some standard hymnal. Differing as critical students do, and must, as to details, they are in substantial agreement in demanding rearrangement of the Biblical material and readjustment of our traditional ideas of authorship along general lines such as these.

Secondly, historical and literary criticism of the Bible has also affected our view of it by revealing to us the presence of correspondences with other ancient religions. It tells us that the Babylonians also had their story of the Creation and of the Flood; that the Assyrian records tell us of an infant prince placed in an ark of bulrushes; that the Babylonian king Hammurabi, a contemporary of Abraham, promulgated a code of law in which are striking resemblances to some provisions in the Mosaic law. We are informed that some of this extra-Biblical material antedates by many years the production of the books of the Bible; it is natural to imagine that at least some of the Biblical material found its source in these earlier stories and laws from the valley of the Euphrates. Moreover, we are told that the Persians developed belief in angels, demons, and personal

immortality long before the Hebrews, and that we find these elements of popular religious thought or fancy only in those Hebrew books which date from a time after the contact of the Hebrew people with the Persians.

To-day historical criticism is busy tracing much of the New Testament thought back to Greek and Alexandrian doctrines and schools. Everywhere correspondences are alleged between the Biblical material and other ancient religions.

Thirdly, the critical study of the Bible has also revealed the presence of what is alleged to be legend, folk-lore, allegory, and drama, where our fathers thought that all was literal history. Genesis, Judges, Jonah afford conspicuous examples.

Fourthly, far more serious, to most minds, is the allegation that in these ancient Hebrew books which form our Bible are to be found crude moral and religious ideals and standards. Even the uncritical generations of the past were greatly concerned over the problem presented by the presence of what they knew as the "Imprecatory Psalms." It was not easy to defend the

divine authority of such sentiments as "Happy is he that taketh thy little ones and dasheth them against the stones," or the exultant savagery that could look forward eagerly to washing one's feet in the blood of the wicked. One of the most effective assaults which Colonel Ingersoll made on the religion of the Bible was at the point where the Israelites are said to have acted by divine command in slaying the Canaanites, men, women, and children. I remember the explanation given in answer to my boyish protest of horror: that the Canaanites were the wickedest people earth has ever known, and that it was necessary to root them out as one exterminates a nest of rattlesnakes. That explanation served until I began to ask evidence of their exceeding wickedness and found that the accusation was based not on documentary evidence but on doctrinal necessity: "They *must* have been supremely wicked, else God would not have given commands for their extermination." This completed a circle within which faith might revolve until too tired to raise questions. It is very difficult for some to accept as equally divine, inspired, and authori-

tative, the scene where Samuel "hews Agag in pieces before the Lord," and the scene where Our Lord, as his last act before his hands are bound, heals the ear of the servant of the high priest. Nor it is easy to accept as on the same level of inspiration the bitter race hatred that flames from the pages of Esther and Zechariah with the human brotherliness of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Many of these revelations of crude moral and religious ideals were overlooked by the men and women of the past age but have been brought to light by the searching Bible study of our time. Take as an illustration a single passage in I Samuel. Saul has been hunting David through the deserts of Judah, and David is protesting against the injustice of the king's attitude. He says: "If it be Jehovah that hath stirred thee up against me, let him smell an offering; but if it be the children of men, cursed be they before Jehovah; for they have driven me out this day, that I should not cleave unto the inheritance of Jehovah, saying, Go, serve other gods."

It is interesting to note the crude ideas which

these words reveal in the mind of David; that Jehovah may be the cause of the jealous, murderous spirit of Saul; that, if such be the case, he may be placated and turned to a different temper by the smell of an offering; that to leave one's country is equivalent to leaving Jehovah and serving other gods, a clear implication that, to David, Jehovah was a god whose sway was limited to Israelitish territory.

These may suffice as instances of the allegations made by serious and honest students of the Biblical material. These allegations seem convincing to many honest and devout minds. And those who accept them as facts cannot hold to a belief in an inerrant Bible.

But, while historical and critical study of the Bible has been at work, another force has also been making it increasingly difficult to believe in the inerrant Bible. I refer to *contact with other religions and their sacred books*. This contact has come about in two ways: through the study of comparative religion and through the extension of missions. Practical, first-hand contact with the great religions of Asia has made it very hard for many honest minds to cling to a

belief in the inerrancy of the Bible. In fact, foreign missions should be classed as one of the chief forces that are necessitating reconstruction in theology. A church that wants to preserve, at all hazards, old forms of theological thinking must abandon or rigidly restrict its missionary operations.

What can the Christian urge in substantiation of his claim that the Bible is inerrant that the Mohammedan cannot urge with equal force for the Koran? In some ways the Mohammedan has the stronger argument. "Your book," he may say, "by its own confession, came in divers portions and manners; a large part of it is anonymous; mine came at one time, to one man, acknowledged to be a great prophet, and brought to him by angels." On *a-priori* grounds, the Mohammedan has the advantage. How can we demand acceptance of the divine authority of the Bible on the basis of its miracles, or of the inspired men who wrote its parts, or of its unique inerrancy, when the representatives of other faiths meet us with identical claims? On what ground dare we assert that all the alleged supernaturalism of the

Bible must be taken as true, and that the miracle stories and angelic authentications of other religious books are fables? Such a presentation of the claims of our religion is not an appeal but a demand; it is an intellectual Mohammedanism, conversion by the sword: "Take this or perish."

Co-operating with both these causes, lying back of them, as of the entire intellectual activity of our age, is the *prevalent spirit of inquiry*. We insist on knowing why we should believe this and that. We have begun to realize the wisdom of the child who is ever asking: "Why?" Perhaps this late age, with all its sophistication, is nearer than past eras to that state of mind which Jesus described in the phrase, "becoming as a little child."

It is an interesting act to ask some one who professes belief in the inerrant Bible to give the reasons for his faith. I have put the question many times and have never heard a convincing answer. Every attempt at a reason rests ultimately on a conviction that God could not use an imperfect instrument and must have given an inerrant book as his revelation. Such a

position contradicts plain facts and partakes of gross irreverence. God has, as a matter of fact, used imperfect instruments again and again, and our right part is not to attempt to say how he must reveal himself but to see honestly how he has revealed himself and be therewith content. There is not an *a-priori* argument or claim advanced to sustain faith in the inerrant Bible which does not hold with equal or greater conclusiveness for the inerrant church.

In fact, the Roman Catholic has the consistent answer to the question: Why believe the Bible to be inerrant? He replies: Because the church says that it is. But the Protestant cannot be content with that answer. Some centuries ago he asked: Who guarantees the church? and found the answer most unsatisfactory. He cannot accept the inerrancy of the Bible on the guarantee of the church; and there seems to be no other. If one is to hold to the inerrancy of the Bible, it must be by an act of faith, not of reason. One has a right, of course, to such a blind faith; but he cannot justify it to others; still less has he the right to demand

it as a condition of good standing in the kingdom or the church.

Now, addressing ourselves to those who, for these or other reasons which seem to them conclusive, feel forced to abandon their belief in the inerrant Bible, we want to ask and answer two questions: What have you lost? and, What remains? If we accept as facts these modern allegations, *what have we lost* from our Bible?

It is amazing how very little we have lost. It is natural, when one first comes upon the modern critical views of the Bible, especially if he comes upon them suddenly, to feel as if all the truth and value of the Bible were being swept away. But when the first sense of panic is past, and one calmly takes account of stock, he finds that the real worth of the Bible is undiminished, and he soon learns that it has been really enhanced.

The story is told of a man who, walking along the edge of a high cliff, suddenly slipped over. He managed to grasp a root and to hang there in terror, dreading the time when he could no longer hold on and must drop to destruction.

At last he felt himself going, closed his eyes for the fearful fall, and dropped about two feet, to find himself standing on a firm ledge of rock, with a good easy path back to safety. So men and women feel their inerrant Bible slipping away and fear a fall into the abyss of unbelief. But when they can no longer hold by the old faith and let go, they find themselves, to their amazement and relief, on solid ground and realize that their panic was unfounded and unnecessary.

What has one lost who has felt compelled to abandon his belief in the inerrancy of the Bible?

You may answer: "I have lost a final authority on historical and scientific questions." But the sufficient answer is in another question: Do you really want a Bible for such a use as that? Would you seriously desire to go back from the modern methods of discovering scientific and historical truth to the times when men settled such matters by quoting texts from the Scriptures? Would you, if you could, turn back from the spirit of the modern university to the spirit of the mediæval church council? Have we not gained rather than lost if the Bible

has ceased to be regarded as a final authority on historical and scientific questions? An inerrant Bible, mercilessly applied by fallible men, would be a terrible curse.

In my father's library is a book which I discovered and read with great interest in my boyhood. It is the "Proceedings of the American Institute of Natural History for the Year 1775." In it is an address by James Bowdoin, President of the Institute, in which he strongly attacks Benjamin Franklin's hypothesis of the ether. He adduces many proofs of the inadequacy of Franklin's theory; but the culminating proof, on which he places his main reliance, is in the form of Biblical quotations. Text after text he marshals, for the crushing of his opponent. After reading the address, one begins to understand Franklin's lack of sympathy with the religious thought of his day and to rejoice that we no longer put the Bible to such base uses.

You may give a second answer: "I have lost *truth* by exchanging fact for fiction." It does seem, at first, as if the Bible were less true, if we acknowledge the presence in it of legend, and drama, folk-lore, and fiction; but does that

follow? Would the parable of the Good Samaritan be any more *true* if you had the name and address of the man, or the receipted bill from the inn at which he cared for the wounded traveller? Is it not simple fact that for the mass of reading men and women as much truth has come to them through fiction as through biography? Is not "Henry Esmond" as true as the life story of your next-door neighbor and far more powerful in its influence over your life?

Here are two books, side by side: one is the last United States Census Report, the other is Robert Louis Stevenson's story "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." The one is fact, painstaking fact, from beginning to end; the other is pure fiction from beginning to end. Yet who can deny that there is in the story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde a terrible, searching truth, "truth in the inward parts," incomparably more worth while for one's spiritual life than the accurate statements of the Census Report?

Is the book of Jonah less *true* if it be a product of the spiritual imagination in which the writer sets forth, as a modern novelist might do, a strong lesson through the movement of char-

acters in a scene? The great spiritual lessons remain unaffected, or even gain in intensity, by our viewing the book as fiction rather than as fact.

You may say: "We have lost the certainty and ease with which we use the Bible, if we take the modern view of it." No doubt that is true. One cannot now open his Bible and read verses at random with a sense of absolute divine authority in any and every verse. He must *know* his Bible, must judge the verse in the light of the man through whom it came, his times, and antecedents. This means that Bible study is harder than of old. But is that a real objection? After twenty years I revisited the college in which I had studied. I entered a fine building equipped with great machines and with a large library. I remarked: "This, I suppose, is the physics building." "Oh, no," said my guide, "this is only one department of what you called physics when you were in college. This is the electricity building." I recalled the little case of electrical instruments, the one classroom, the set of five thin volumes of Deschanel's "Physics," in use in my college

days. How easy, compact, and precise was our knowledge compared with the complex, bewildering mass of specialized study now comprehended in the department of physics. Did I pity the student of to-day for having lost the ease and certainty of the knowledge of my student days? I trow not. Why should we be willing that our religion, our Bible study, should be the one unprogressive element in our real life and knowledge?

Perhaps the answer that would be met most frequently and positively would be: "We have lost the inspiration of the Bible if we adopt the modern view of it." But to this there are two strong and straight replies: the first is that some of the men and women who love the Bible most enthusiastically, and use it most effectively, and believe its teachings most readily, are men and women who are whole-souled adherents of the modern view of the Bible; and they declare that their sense of its power and beauty and value has been enhanced rather than diminished by the change of view. The second answer is that the question whether or no you have lost the inspiration of the Bible depends on your

definition of inspiration. If you start with the dictum that inspiration and inerrancy are synonymous, of course the matter is settled—you have begged the question. But why should we think that there is in any degree a necessary connection between inerrancy and inspiration? The most inerrant thing in the world is a table of figures, and is there anything less inspired or inspiring? The Bible has proved beyond dispute that its inspiration is in its thought, not in its words, by the ease with which it has been rendered into every language without the loss of its God quality. We are told that Christian Scientists in Germany asked that "Science and Health" be issued in a German translation for their use. Mrs. Eddy long denied the request, stating that the delicate shades of meaning defied translation. Finally consent was given, but with the proviso that the German translation could be published only with the original English version in parallel columns. Defenders of the "inerrancy of the original autographs" of the Bible should, to be consistent, insist on the publication of the original Hebrew and Greek, along with the ren-

dering of the Bible in every modern language. But no one possesses, or is sure of, the original Hebrew and Greek; and the very glory of the Bible is that it can be translated into every tongue the human race uses, without loss of its divine character and inspiration.

Does one lose anything real and valuable in adopting the modern view of the Bible? I, for one, have yet to be informed of any such loss.

Turn to the other question: *What remains?*

One is tempted to answer: Everything. But it is easy to give particulars. There remains *the incomparable dignity and moral integrity of the Bible.*

It is amazing how little the literary and moral grandeur of the Bible is affected even by the most radical of attempts at critical reconstruction. The truth is that we are alarmed, and wonder if the Bible is "just like other books," because the rationalistic critic tells us but half the story. He tells us that the Babylonians had a story of Creation which antedates the Hebrew story in the opening paragraphs of Genesis. But he does not tell us that it reads

like a crazy man's version of the Nibelungenlied beside the calm, eternal restraint and majesty of the first chapter of the Bible. He tells us eagerly that the story of Moses in the bulrushes is similar to an Assyrian tale of a prince placed in an ark and floated down the river. But he fails to say that that one incident is about all we know of the Assyrian prince, while it is a trifling incident which might be cut out without real loss in the career of Moses, who "endured as seeing him who is invisible." He tells us of the code of Hammurabi, as antedating the law of Moses, and strongly urges the probability that Moses' law is indebted to the earlier code. But he does not dwell on the supreme, decisive fact that the code of Hammurabi has lain through the ages, dead, on clay tablets, while the code of Moses is throbbing in the life of modern democracy. He tells us that the Babylonians had a story of the Flood, very like that which the Hebrews later wrote out. But he does not set side by side the endings of the stories; the Babylonian gods howling like dogs as the Flood rose, threatening them, and flocking like flies to the smoke of the incense; Je-

hovah "sitting as King at the Flood," setting his bow in the sky, giving the majestic promise of unfailing seasons and harvests. Grant all that is claimed by the extreme rationalistic critic, and the Bible is still in a different class from other ancient religious literature, in its grandeur, self-restraint, and integrity.

There remains this—the one great fact that makes the Bible of worth to us—that it is the wonderful, absolutely trustworthy *Book of the Life of the Spirit.* It is the history, the prophecy, the text-book of the life of the Spirit of God.

It is, and will always be, the great history of the life of the Spirit of God. It shows how the *life of the Spirit* grew to maturity among an ancient people who were chosen of God for that purpose, or who had a genius for religion (it comes to the same thing); a people who started near the bottom in moral and religious and social life and grew into the "perfect man in Christ Jesus."

All the crudities, the superstitions, the imperfect beliefs, even the savage elements of character and thought, fall into place as parts of this wonderful development. We are watch-

ing a wonderful character, *The Hebrew, the Man of God*, grow from babyhood to splendid, noble manhood. It is inevitable, natural, part of the value and interest of the story, that in the earlier sections childishness should loom large. The perfect ideal at the end is the more impressive that we have watched its growth through great moral and religious changes. We see the ambition of the people of God change so that instead of "Israel the head of the nations," appears "Israel the suffering servant." We watch the figure of the ideal man develop from Samson, the mere warrior, to David, the statesman, to Jeremiah, the man of God, to Jesus, the Son of God. We see the race that could sing the sword song of Lamech develop spiritually to the place where choice spirits could appreciate the message: "I say unto you, love your enemies."

What matters it if in the course of this growth the Hebrews absorbed ideas from their neighbors? Is the pearl less wonderful that it began with a grain of sand from outside?

And the Bible is also the *text-book* of the life of the Spirit, not merely its history. Its very

variety, the jumble of history, poem, essay, drama, law, song, story gives to the Bible its power to reach every heart and minister to every human soul as a book of precise dogma never could. The sceptic has Ecclesiastes. The philosopher has Job, which Carlyle and Hugo have called the greatest of all books. The practical worker has Nehemiah and the Acts. The mystic has Isaiah and John and Revelation. The heart of youth finds love at its best in the Song of Songs. The priestridden has the glorious story of the struggle of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah for pure religion, and its flower and fruitage in the gospel of Jesus. The missionary has Paul. The dreamer has Ezekiel. The sufferer has II Isaiah, and shares with the joyous, yea, with all men, the Psalter and the Gospels.

I dare assert that the Bible *could not* thus minister to all phases of human life had it not come as a book of life, through slow growth, among a people seeking clearer sight of God.

It is the biography of the Spirit of God as he lived out his life among the Hebrew people.

All this is simply and absolutely unaffected

by any changes of view, or rearrangement of material, or correspondence with other ancient religious literature, or discovery of crude moral and religious ideals. It is the record, once for all, of how the Spirit of God took, as an object-lesson for the race, a set of people and led them on and up, from a germ of faith amid much grossness and superstition, to the perfect man in Christ Jesus.

Whenever I contrast *the Bible as it is* with *the Bible as some good people want it to be*, I recall Paul's great saying: "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." We know the sort of Bible some of our wise men would have made, had the task fallen to them: an inerrant book, precise in its wording as is "Science and Health," logically articulated as are the great creeds. But somehow all these logical and precise books get on the shelf, while the Bible still goes on living among the people. Men want us to believe that the Bible is like a formal garden; but we find it to be more truly God's that in it is the divine disorder of the forest.

Which is better worth calling a gift from God, a book let down direct from heaven, or

dictated word for word to stenographers, or a book wrought out through the ages, by men whom God made to think, poets, artists, who learned by pains, bloodshed, costly mistakes, and many turnings and climbings what God is and where his truth is to be found? Such a sword of the Spirit is no magic blade; it is forged from

> "Iron dug from central gloom,
> And heated hot with burning fears,
> And dipped in baths of hissing tears,
> And battered by the shocks of doom
> To shape and use."

It is such a weapon as this that the spirit of man needs. And such a sword of the Spirit God has given us.

Should any one ask, What is the *authority* of such a book? the answer is: The book itself. Take it and use it, and it will speak to you with the authority of God's Spirit.

This is where the great church leaders of other days rested their faith in the authority and inspiration of the Bible. The inspiration of the Bible must be proved, as is the inspiration of the Fifth Symphony, by setting men in its

presence and letting it speak to them. The Bible is its own evidence. We ask with Augustine: "What matters it whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch if we know it comes from the Spirit of God?" We say with Coleridge that the Bible is inspired because it "finds" us. We agree with Calvin and with the Westminster Confession of Faith that the supreme evidence is "the Holy Spirit witnessing in our hearts as we read."

The Bible, as we have it, used with care and patience and love, with faith and prayer, is our one absolutely reliable guide in knowing God's will and living with him. That is its worth and its glory, which any one who will may prove for himself.

## THE GOSPEL OF REDEMPTION

CHRISTIANITY is essentially a religion of redemption. Some have said that Christianity is "a religion of a book." It is not. The emblem on its banner is not an open book but a cross.

To view the same fact from another angle, Christianity came to give life. Its mission is, supremely, not to teach nor to correct but to empower, to impart strength and poise. A Christian ought to be able to do and endure what others cannot. It ought to be characteristic of every Christian to be able to say, with Paul: "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." Christ stated his own mission in the words: "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly."

This is the characteristic that strikes the reader of the New Testament. What is it that marks these Christians, distinguishing them from the people about them? As you watch

them you do not say, "How learned these Christians are!" or even, "How upright they are!" You say: "How vital they are, how full of fervor and enthusiasm and a sense of spiritual power!" It was a new life force that entered Paul and Peter and the rest, irresistible, supernatural, an unfailing source of strength and joy.

It is always the aim of Christianity to give its disciples such strength and joy, such living power and poise. One who has not that result has missed something essential in the gospel.

It is hard, if not impossible, to define this new life which characterizes the Christian. We call it "redemption," "salvation," but the reality breaks through all our attempts to confine it within a definition. Salvation is something as broad as life itself, as varied as human nature is varied. To be saved is to be changed from what one is to what one ought to be or to have that change begun and assured. No doubt we have erred in thinking of salvation too exclusively in terms of the future life and of deliverance from sin. To be saved is to be set free from doubts and fears and aimlessness and self-centredness, as well as from actual

sin. In the fifteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel Jesus tells us three stories to illustrate the meaning of the word "lost." In the first story there is no implication of sin. The sheep is lost by being away from its home, wandering far from safety and comfort. The salvation it needs is to be delivered from the dangers and fears of its situation. In the second story the coin has been neither wicked nor foolish. It is out of use, lost to its true life values. The salvation it needs is to be set in circulation again or put in its rightful place among the woman's treasures. In the third story, of course, there is moral evil. The son needs to be saved from his sin and set right with his father. Salvation is thus seen to be a broad and inclusive word. In the first epistle of Peter is a significant phrase, in which Christians are said to be saved "from their vain manner of life handed down from their fathers."

Are there not many to-day who need to be thus delivered from traditions and conventions and set free to live a joyous and strong life of their own? Christ and his gospel come to do that, to save us from all that hinders us from

living the fullest possible life, the life God planned for us.

The gospel aims to bring salvation to each individual and to the world as a whole.

How shall we set in words the salvation which Christianity offers to the individual? We may use Harnack's splendid phrase: "Eternal life, in the midst of time, by the strength and under the eyes of God." Or we may phrase it thus: *An ever-deepening, never-ending fellowship with God.* To be "saved" is to be brought into that friendship and left there, to grow and deepen till we come to the fullest possibility of godlikeness. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee."

We need to realize that "fellowship" is far more than feeling. One may have little emotion in his religious experience and yet have real fellowship with God. There are days when one plods along under gray skies, quietly and resolutely doing the will of God with little or no emotion, that bring a peculiar sense of satisfaction that is clear proof of the fellowship of God, clearer proof, perhaps, than extreme ecstasy. We are to love God with all the nature, mind,

and strength, no less than heart. Into all the present and future meanings and promises of this never-ending, ever-deepening fellowship with God we cannot enter. It involves personal immortality. We may pause to say only this—that there are three strong bases for faith in personal immortality. The first is faith in God the Father of our spirits. The sixteenth Psalm is a strong statement of the assurance springing from such faith. The second is the evident worth of personality. It seems plain that the goal of evolution is in the spirit of man. Can that which is the crown of all be tossed aside in obedience to some material disarrangement? Is not personality too precious to be thus snuffed out?

> "My own dim life should teach me this,
> That life shall live forevermore;
> Else earth were darkness at the core,
> And dust and ashes all that is."

And if "my own dim life" is too dim to give assurance to my heart, the third support holds —the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. Surely I can believe in his immortality, even if it is

hard to believe in my own. "It was not possible that *he* should be holden of *it*." There is the truth about Christ and death.

The Christian ought to live, every day, in "the power of an endless life." He ought to "practise immortality"—to use Lyman Abbott's fine phrase, to grow more sure of endless life as the body draws near its end. Is there a finer ambition for any son of man than to be able at last to say:

"I have climbed to the snows of age, and I gaze at a field in the past,
Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a low desire;
But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the man is quiet at last
As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a height that is higher!"

To know all that the Christian gospel means by "salvation" for the world as a whole we would have to study the whole teaching of Jesus and his apostles concerning the kingdom and set in the light of that "message of the kingdom" all our studies and strivings to-day after a better social state. "The kingdom of God on earth,"

"the brotherhood of man," "the Christianizing of the social order," the state indicated in the Lord's Prayer in which the will of God shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven—all these are phases of that social salvation which Christianity came to bring.

The Christian is, or should be, interested in two cities. One of them is the great Christian civilization abuilding here on earth, the New Jerusalem, the new America, the new world, slowly forming amid the chaos of the world's present life. The other is that place "not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens," "a little city in the hills," called "Home," into which "God's kindest angel" will sometime lead us. What lives we ought to live, with such great hopes to allure and inspire us! The two hopes of individual and social salvation continually interact. They are helpless each without the other. No individual soul is fully saved until living in a saved world; yet the world never can be saved except as individuals are led into fellowship with God and live as saved men should. Social service and evangelism must move side by side, beneath the banner of the cross, to the conquest of the world.

Here, then, is the real aim and mission of Christianity: to bring this salvation to individuals and the world, transforming them from what they are into what they ought to be.

What are the means which Christianity uses for the accomplishment of its redemptive mission? There are three great agencies used by the Spirit of God for the saving of individual lives and the world. They are: *The attraction of an ideal, the impartation of life,* and *the bearing of our sins.*

The great common motive power in all spiritual achievement is *the attraction of an ideal.* Fanciful or extravagant as it may sound, the saying is absolutely true that "God has chosen *things that are not* to bring to naught *things that are.*" Every great and worthy achievement of the spirit of man has come because some man saw something that *was not,* and determined that it should be. I borrow from Professor Palmer an illustration all the more helpful for its extreme homeliness: A train is pulling out from a station, and a man is running to catch the train. What makes the cars go? Something that *is,* the fact that they are connected

with the engine. What makes the man go? Something that *is not*, the fact that he is not connected with the engine but *wants to be*. The one is pulled by a force, the other by an ideal.

One of the most powerful means God uses to pull individuals or a world up from what they are to what they should be is the attraction of an ideal, a vision.

> "Could'st thou in vision see
> Thyself the man God meant,
> Thou nevermore would'st be
> The man thou art, content."

A great part of the saving power of Christ is in the fact that he stands before us the incarnation of *what we might be*, what God means us to be. A great part of the power of the gospel to save the world is its clear vision of a "new world wherein dwelleth righteousness," a city that is to be.

Our Lord set powerfully before us this motive and its might when he said: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Yet an ideal will not suffice. The soul of man needs more than a beautiful picture of

what it might be. Professor Johnston Ross well says that Christ is more than a "spiritual Apollo." The soul needs power to pursue the ideal, to realize it, to follow it through the tangle of daily duties and problems, to hold true through the long day to the dreams of the night. So it is that the gospel comes to us savingly with an offer of strength, power, life, for the attaining of the ideal.

> "The true God-function
> Is to furnish a motive and injunction
> For practising what we know already."

Perhaps the most serious failure of the average Christian is his weakness. He needs to learn to say, "I can," whenever the Spirit of God shows him a duty or opportunity. Only a religion of vitality will impress men with its reality. Is not that, in part, what Jesus meant by his strange words about the ability of faith to remove mountains? "Nothing shall be impossible to you." We are sure this is no grant of powers to match our whims. The kingdom and the will of God were always in the background when Jesus spoke.

He meant by these uncompromising words that, once a Christian is sure of the thing God wants, he must not admit the possibility of impossibility, for a Christian is always capable of doing God's will for him; the God who calls him to the task empowers him for it.

Here also the proof is not feeling but result. The way to be sure that God gives strength is not to wait till one feels the power but to go on with the task.

But the heart of man—of most men, at any rate—has always felt that the problem of redemption goes deeper than ideals or power can reach. For the serious fact is that I am wrong, and the world is wrong, and somehow that wrong must be set right. It is no mere error to be overcome by wiping the slate clean and starting again. This moral condition in the individual and in society goes to the roots and demands radical treatment. So we come to the third great element in God's saving grace, *his bearing of our sins* that we may be cleansed and freed from sin and set right with him, starting "pure and fresh and sinless in his holy eyes."

Because we people of to-day see and think less clearly here than at most places in our religion we need to give the more attention to the meaning of the cross, the atonement for sin.

Christian sense has always *felt* that there is an intimate connection between the cross of Christ on Calvary and the salvation of the individual soul and of the world. But we should not rest content with a feeling; we want a reason; at least, we would be sure that our feeling is not unreasonable, not fundamentally out of harmony with our necessary thinking.

Yet how can it be that an event of nineteen centuries ago can really mean anything to us, vitally affect our salvation to-day? That is the question.

Our fathers were prompt with their answer. They made it a simple legal or commercial transaction. Sin was a debt owed to God; Christ, on the cross, paid the debt, and I am free. Sin was a breaking of the law. I was condemned to death in punishment for my sin; Christ, on the cross, bore the penalty, and I am free, the demands of justice having been

satisfied. In short, Christ was our substitute before God.

But such explanations, satisfying as they were to our fathers, are utterly unsatisfactory to many to-day, meaningless, or actually repulsive. We view God and life differently from the way of our fathers. We think in terms of personal relationship rather than of legal or commercial dealings. We rightly teach our children that bargaining is contrary to the spirit of the home, that there must not be trafficking between members of the same family. Our studies in psychology also make it hard, if not impossible, to accept the possibility of a transfer of guilt from one person to another; and our systems of legal procedure have changed, and are changing mightily, so that the main end sought in our courts is not abstract vindication of justice by the infliction of punishment of such a quantity and quality for such a crime, but rather the reclaiming of the offender.

For those whose minds work along these new lines it is necessary that the meaning of the cross, the necessity that God should bear our sins, and the fact that he does, should be seen

from a new approach. I suggest a faith in the atonement of Christ, reached by six steps, a faith far from complete, but, I believe, real and powerful.

1. *The one great curse of man is sin.* Many dreadful evils confront and follow man: poverty, ignorance, disease. But the most radical of all is *sin*. Some men sin because they are sick or poor or ignorant. But more men are sick and poor and ignorant because of sin—not their own, perhaps, but the sin of some one or of many or of all.

2. *The essence of sin is not wrong acts but the wrong self.* The reality of the sin lies not in the act but in the will. This is the bit of truth to be extracted from the discredited and disowned doctrine that "the good deeds of sinful men are sinful." We talk folly when we speak of sins as if they were concrete entities apart from ourselves, a pile of past performances which God can take away without touching us. Bergson has made vivid to some of us the great truth that there is no *dead* past. The past lives in each of us. Further, Burbank defines heredity as "the sum of past environments."

Each man, each age, is the incarnation of all the past. The wrong deed is done; nothing can change it. There is what Royce calls "the hell of the irrevocable." But the sin is not past and done; the sin is *you*, your wrong will; something must change that, if the sin is to be set right.

3. *Salvation*, then, *is not the overlooking, or getting rid of, wrong acts but the transforming of the wrong self.* The only effective way to deal with the past is to deal with that past as it is embedded in what you are at the present moment. Too often we think of our sins as dead things left somewhere behind us; it seems sufficient to ask God to forgive and forget, confident that in his love he will answer as the little girl said he did, saying: "Don't mention it." But sin is not something left behind as we move; it is a disease that lives and grows in us. We must cry: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" And the divine answer will be: "Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Not "*you* shall be" but "*they* shall be." The sins shall be made white, for the

essence of the sin is the wrong will. The very zeal that made Paul the chief of sinners made him also the chief of missionaries. His *sin* was made white. Salvation is not taking care of your acts; it is remaking you.

4. *The one effective method* of salvation (transforming wrong selves) *is vicarious suffering*, in which one life enters into another life, one spirit bears the burden of another spirit's struggle.

This is a universal, cosmic principle. Henry Drummond was right in saying that Darwin saw but one half of life, and that the lower half, in announcing "the struggle for life" as the explanation of life. Along with "the struggle for existence" has always gone on "the struggle for the life of others," its roots far back in processes of reproduction, its manifestations increasingly clear in the care of animals for their young, the love of parents, friends, and teachers, the devotion of the patriot, the self-sacrifice of the martyr. Drummond tells of two college mates, one a youth of brilliant promise but cursed with evil habits. The other, with silent intent of saving him, asked to be his roommate and then lived with him, patiently bearing his sins,

sharing his experiences, until he had saved him through the strength and shame of that constant companionship. That sort of vicarious suffering is the one effective method of saving anybody from anything that curses his life.

If this method runs, as it does, throughout life, if it is cosmic in its reach, then it must be God's method of saving us, of transforming us from what we are to what we ought to be—this method of bearing our sins, patiently living and sharing with us, winning us by sacrificial devotion and passion.

5. *The supreme expression of the principle of vicarious suffering is the cross of Christ.* That which we see or feel, with more or less clearness, in motherhood, friendship, martyrdom, and feel sure must be in the silent patience of the eternal, blazes into light in the cross of Calvary.

For that cross, as a fact of human history, sets forth as nothing else does or can, the great facts of man's sin and God's salvation.

All suffering, all tragedy, speaks of the curse of sin. But surely the climax of sin is reached when the world takes the One who is purest, noblest, worthiest, who comes with wonderful

gifts and graces of ideals and powers, and kills him. The worst indictment of human sin is that the world could do nothing better with Jesus than to put him out of the way.

You may say: "That is a fact of nineteen hundred years ago." But are you so sure? The timelessness of Christ is in the cross; Calvary is ageless, is typical. For we *know that what occurred then would occur in any age.* Should Jesus come now, challenging this age as he challenged that, he would suffer something analogous to the crucifixion. And if he would not be treated with that extreme of bitterness, the difference would be due to the influence of his life and death through the centuries. The cross is the timeless revelation of the curse of sin.

But it is as well the ageless revelation of the lengths to which God will always go to set us right. Jesus "gave the last full measure of devotion." "Greater love hath no man than this." He loved "unto the end." And therein he revealed God. The cross shows us, in one event of tragic glory, what God is always ready to do for the salvation of men and the world.

Old Testament prophets saw dimly that this spirit was in their God. "In all their affliction he was afflicted." "I have made, and I will bear." The cross witnesses to us that God shares with us the weight and the responsibilities of our sin. His highest revelation is not only in *a man* but in *a man crucified*, a man who "loved unto the uttermost."

As the personality of Jesus shows, in one supreme object-lesson, *what God always is*, so the cross of Jesus shows, in one sublime event, *what God is always doing;* giving himself in extreme devotion to save us by bearing our sins and us. That which saves me to-day is, in truth, not a fact of nineteen centuries ago but the atoning love of the living God, manifested most sharply in the cross of Calvary, but "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." The blood that saves is that of the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," the life of God in the soul of man and of the world to-day.

6. There is one more step we must take if we would fit the cross, the real meaning of salvation, to our lives and the life of the world, and make it effective for redemption. We must

realize that *every Christian has a share in the cross*, in the God work of freeing men and the world from sin.

"The cross on Golgotha will never save thy soul;
The cross in thine own heart alone can make thee whole."

Christ told us to bear the cross. He gave no hint that our bearing of it was to be essentially different from his own. We are to exemplify the atoning love of God in our little and poor way, as he in his great and glorious way. What other meaning can we give to the words: "Even as the Son of Man came into the world to give his life a ransom for many." One of the greatest of New Testament scholars declares that nowhere in the New Testament is the cross mentioned where it is not viewed as belonging to the disciple as it belonged to the Master.

How virile and positive is Paul's appropriation of the cross! "I fill up that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ," he said. And evidently he has in mind something similar to the meaning of the words in which he tells the Philippian Christians that Epaphroditus has

supplied what was "lacking" in their gift. The gift was complete, but the Philippians could not apply it in person, and so Epaphroditus supplied that "lacking" element by being the personal bond of union and communication. So we, today, are to "bear the cross," to "fill up that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ." For only as men see in us the revelation of his sacrificial love, will they see it in the cross of Christ, and come to know that that sacrificial, patient, sin-bearing love is always in God our Father and always ready to save us from our sins. "He laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

So our aim, as Christians, must be to be companions of the cross, fellow workers with God in saving the world from sin. No one is truly fully saved, as Jesus thought of salvation, until he is enlisted in saving effort. It is not enough to sing: "Simply to Thy cross we cling." We must learn to sing, "Jesus, I my cross have taken"; to cling to the cross not as a drowning man clings to a life-preserver but as a color sergeant clings to the flag intrusted to his courage and honor and loyalty.

Like all the great truths of religion, the cross finds its revelation and proof in personal experience. If religion is to prove itself to you, and through you to others, it must be done not by dogma but by deeds, not by logic but by life, not by intellectual evidence but by plain living with God in an ever-deepening fellowship that holds within itself the promise of eternal life.

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